



# THE DAYS OF MY LIFE

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY

SIR H. RIDER HAGGARD

AUTHOR OF 'KING SOLOMON'S MINES,' 'SHE,' 'RURAL ENGLAND,' ETC.

EDITED BY

C. J. LONGMAN

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS*

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

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*I dedicate this record of my days  
to my dear Wife and to the  
memory of our son whom now  
I seek*

*H. Rider Haggard*

MIDNIGHT  
WHIT SUNDAY  
1912





## PREFACE

HENRY RIDER HAGGARD was born on June 22, 1856, and died on May 14, 1925. The present work covers the first fifty-six years of his life, commencing with his earliest recollections and ending on September 25, 1912. On that day he wrote to me: 'I have just written the last word of "The Days of My Life," and thankful I am to have done with that book. Whenever I can find time and opportunity I wish to add "A Note on Religion," which, when done, if ever, I will send to you.' This 'note' he sent me on January 24, 1913. By his wish the entire MS. was sealed up and put away in Messrs. Longmans' safe, and was seen no more till after his death, when it was opened by me in the presence of one of his executors.

Rider Haggard entered on the serious business of life at an early age. He sailed for South Africa in July 1875, when he was only just nineteen, on the staff of Sir Henry Bulwer, the newly appointed Governor of Natal. Eighteen months later he was attached to the special mission to the Transvaal, led by Sir Theophilus Shepstone, which resulted in the annexation of the Transvaal to Great Britain on April 12, 1877. Shortly after the annexation the Master and Registrar of the High Court at Pretoria died, and Haggard was appointed as Acting Master when he was barely twenty-one, an age at which his contemporaries in England were undergraduates at college. This provisional appointment was confirmed a year later.

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into affairs had an effect in moulding Rider Haggard's character, and that effect would not be diminished by the tragic nature of the events which quickly followed, with which he was closely connected—Isandlwana, Majuba, and the Retrocession of the Transvaal.

In consequence of the Retrocession he returned to England in the autumn of 1881. His African career was ended, he had a young wife and child, and he still had his way to make in the world. His six years of Africa had, however, not only given him a knowledge of the world and a self-reliance rare in so young a man, but had also enabled him to acquire an intimate knowledge of the history and characteristics of the Native Races, which he was subsequently able to turn to good account.

From the circumstances of his early life he was thrown much into the company of men older than himself, and he had a singular gift of winning not only their confidence, but their love. The happy relations which he was able to establish with his superiors in the Government service are an example of this, and it was a faculty which never left him.

This autobiography deals not only with Haggard's life in South Africa, and with his literary career, but also with an aspect of his many activities which is less familiar to those who knew him mainly as a writer of romances. He was always dominated by a strong sense of duty, and by an ardent patriotism, and the direction in which he thought that he could best serve his country was in an attempt to arrest the rapidly growing migration of population from the country districts to the slums of the towns. He thought that a healthy, contented, and prosperous rural population was the greatest asset that a country could possess, and this work will show with what ardour and energy he

devoted himself to the furtherance of this object, and to the prosperity of agriculture generally. He journeyed through twenty-seven counties examining the condition of agriculture, and published the results of this survey in his book 'Rural England.' This undertaking he described as 'the heaviest labour of all my laborious life.' Besides this he travelled through the United States and to Canada as a Commissioner appointed by the Colonial Office, to report to the Secretary of State on the Labour Colonies instituted by the Salvation Army. He also served on Royal Commissions which involved much labour and long journeys. If to give unsparingly of one's time and abilities to the service of one's fellow-men, without hope of reward, is to be a philanthropist, surely Rider Haggard deserved that honoured name. But, like many another man who devotes his time to work of this character, he was much discouraged and disappointed because his labours were not crowned by immediate results. Nevertheless, it is probable that the causes for which he worked will, in the long run, triumph, and the work which he gave so unsparingly will not be wasted.

I undertook the preparation of this work for the press because my friend, Rider Haggard, wished me to do so. I hope I have not bungled or failed in the execution of this labour of love. I wish especially to express my gratitude to Miss Hector, who acted as Sir Rider's secretary for thirty-four years, up to the time of his death, for reading the proofs and for her unfailing kindness and help in many ways.

My thanks are also due to various gentlemen for permission to print letters: viz. the Father Superior of Mount Saint Bernard's Abbey for several letters from the late Brother Basil; Mr. E. F. Benson for an extract from a letter of Archbishop Benson; the executors of Sir Walter

Besant; Mr. Bramwell Booth, General of the Salvation Army, for letters from himself and from General William Booth; the Earl of Carnarvon for a letter from his grandfather; the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill for a letter from himself, and one from Lady Leslie; Lady Clarke for a letter from Sir Marshal Clarke; the executors of Miss Marie Corelli; Sir Douglas Dixie, Bart., for a letter from the late Lady Florence Dixie; Lady Gwendolen Elveden for one from the late Earl of Onslow; Sir Bartle Frere for a letter from his father; Sir Edmund Gosse; Earl Grey for letters from his father; the Viscountess Harcourt for letters from the late Viscount Harcourt; Mrs. Hanbury for a letter from the late Rt. Hon. R. W. Hanbury; the executors of the late W. E. Henley; Mr. H. C. L. Holden for a letter from Dr. Holden; Messrs. Hutchinson and Co., Ltd., for a letter from Messrs. Hurst and Blackett; the executors of the late Mr. J. Cordy Jeaffreson; Mr. Rudyard Kipling; Chief Justice J. K. Kotzé; Mrs. Andrew Lang for many letters from her husband; Sir Oliver Lodge; the Hon. Mrs. A. Lyttelton; the executors of the late Sir Melmoth Osborn; Mr. Lloyd Osbourne for five letters and an unpublished poem by R. L. Stevenson; Messrs. G. Routledge and Sons, Ltd., for a letter from Mr. Trübner; the executors of the late President Roosevelt; Colonel Walter Shepstone for letters from his father, Sir Theophilus Shepstone; Miss Townsend for a letter from her father, Mr. Meredith Townsend; Mr. Evelyn Wrench for extracts from the *Spectator*. I have also to express my thanks to the following gentlemen for kindly reading and consenting to the publication of passages referring to them: Sir E. Wallis Budge, Major Burnham, The Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd George, and Mr. Thomas Hardy, O.M.

July 1926.

C. J. LONGMAN.

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## INTRODUCTION

A WHILE ago, it may have been a year or more, the telephone in this house rang and down the mysterious wire—for notwithstanding a thousand explanations, what is more mysterious than a telephone wire, except a telephone without one?—came an excited inquiry from a London press agency, as to whether I were dead.

Miss Hector, my secretary, answered that to the best of her knowledge and belief I was out walking on my farm in an average state of health. Explanations followed; diversified by telegrams from the Authors' Society and others interested in the continuance or the cessation of my terrestrial life. From these it appeared that, like a sudden wind upon the sea, a rumour had sprung up to the effect that I had vanished from the world.

It was a false rumour, but the day must come, when or how I know not, since Providence in its mercy hides this ultimate issue from our eyes, on which it will be true, and like the storm that I hear raving outside the windows as I write, the elemental forces which are about every one of us will sweep me away as they brought me here and my place will know me no more.

Before this event happens to me, this common, everyday event which excites so little surprise even among those who knew us and yet, whatever his degree

or lack of faith, is so important to the individual concerned, shall overtake me, before I too, like the countless millions who have gone before, put on the Purple and have my part in the majesty of Death, it has entered into my mind that I desire to set down, while I still have my full faculties, certain of my experiences of life.

I have met many men, I have seen many lands, I have known many emotions—all of them, I think, except that of hate; I have played many parts. From all this sum of things, tangible or intangible, hidden now in the heart and the memory, some essence may perhaps be pressed which is worthy of preservation, some picture painted at which eyes unborn may be glad to look. At least, such is my hope.

It is of course impossible for anyone, yes, even for a nun in a convent, to set down life's every detail for the world to stare at, unless indeed such a person were prepared to order the resulting book to be buried for—let us say—five hundred years. Could such a work be written by a hand adequate to the task, its interest as a human document would be supreme. Also it would be beautiful in the sense that the naked truth is always beautiful, even when it tells of evil. Yet I believe that it never will be written. For were the writer mean enough to draw the veil from the failings of others, he would certainly keep it wrapped about his own. Only one man, so far as my knowledge goes, has set down the absolute verity about himself, and it is certain that he did not intend that it should come to the printing-press. I refer to Samuel Pepys.

Still an enormous amount remains of which a man may write without injuring or hurting the feelings of anyone, and by aid of my memory that, although weak enough in many ways, is strong and clear where essentials are concerned, and of the correspondence which,

as it chances, I have preserved for years, with some of this matter I propose to deal. After all, a man of normal ability and observation who has touched life at many points, cannot pass fifty-five years in the world without learning much, some of which may prove of use to others, and if he dies leaving his experience unrecorded, then like water thrown upon sand it sinks into the grave with him and there is wasted.

Such are the considerations that lead me to attempt this task.

I suppose that before pursuing it further the first question that I should ask myself and try to answer is, not to what extent I have achieved success, but by how much I have escaped failure in the world. No positive reply seems possible to this query until I have been dead a good many years, for in such matters time is the only true judge. Yet that final verdict is capable of a certain amount of intelligent, though possibly erroneous anticipation.

Although all my life I have been more or less connected with the Law, for which I have a natural liking, first as the Master of a High Court and subsequently in the modest but I trust useful office of the Chairman of a Bench of Magistrates, I have done nothing at all at my profession at the Bar. In an unfortunate hour, considered from this point of view, I employed my somewhat ample leisure in chambers in writing 'King Solomon's Mines.' That, metaphorically, settled my legal hash. Had it not been for 'King Solomon's Mines,' if even in imagination I may dwell upon such splendour, I might possibly have sat some day where sits my old friend and instructor, Sir Henry Bargrave Deane, as a judge of the Court of Probate and Divorce, in which I proposed to practise like my great-uncle, Doctor John Haggard, famous for his Reports, before me.



Well do I remember how, when one day I was seated in this Division watching a case or devilling for somebody, I unconsciously inscribed my name on the nice white blotting-paper before me. Presently from behind me I heard a whisper from some solicitor—I think that was his calling—whom business had brought to the Court :

‘Are you Rider Haggard, the man who wrote “King Solomon’s Mines”?’ he said, staring at the tell-tale blotting-paper.

I intimated that such was really my name.

‘Then, confound you! Sir, you kept me up till three o’clock this morning. But what are you doing here in a wig and gown—what are you doing here?’

Very soon I found cause to echo the question and to answer it in the words, ‘No good.’ The British solicitor, and indeed the British client, cannot be induced to put confidence in anyone who has become well known as an author. If he has confined his attention to the writing of law-books, he may be tolerated, though hardly, but if his efforts have been on the imaginative side of literature, then for that man they have no use. That such a person should combine gifts of imagination with forensic aptitude and sound legal knowledge is to them a thing past all belief.

A page or so back I said that my experience might possibly be of use to others, and already the suggestion seems in the way of proof. If what I write should prevent even one young barrister who hopes to make a mark in his profession, from being beguiled into the fatal paths of authorship, I shall not have laboured in vain.

Next, I have never been able to gratify a very earnest ambition of my younger years, namely, to enter Parliament and shine as a statesman. Once

I tried : it was at the 1895 election, and I almost carried one of the most difficult seats in England. But almost is not quite, and the awful expense attendant upon contesting a seat in Parliament (in a county division it costs, or used to cost, over £2000) showed me clearly that, unless they happen to be Labour members, such a career is only open to rich men. Also I came to understand that it would be practically impossible for me both to earn a living by the writing of books and to plunge eagerly into Parliamentary work, as I know well that I should have done. Even if I could have found the time by writing in the mornings—which, where imaginative effort is concerned, has always been distasteful to me—my health would never have borne the double strain.

So that dream had to be abandoned, for which I am sorry. Indeed, a legislative career is about the only one of which the doors are not shut to the writer of fiction, as is proved by many instances, notably that of Disraeli.

Thus it comes about that on these lines I have failed to make any mark. Fate has shut those doors in my face. The truth is that 'man knoweth not his own way': he must go where his destiny leads him. Either so or he is afloat upon an ocean of chance, driven hither and thither by its waves, till at length his frail bark is upset or sinks worn out. This, however, I do not believe. If everything else in the universe is governed by law, why should the lot of man alone be excepted from the workings of law?

However this may be, as heralds say in talking of a doubtful descent, whether through appointment or accidentally, it has so come about that, although I have done other things, I must earn my living by the pen. Now of this I should not have complained had I been

in a position to choose my own subjects. But unhappily those subjects which attract me, such as agricultural and social research, are quite unremunerative. Everybody talks of the resulting volumes, which receive full and solemn review in all the newspapers, but very few people buy them in these days. So far as I am aware, remunerative books may be divided roughly into three classes. (1) School or technical works, which must be purchased by scholars preparing for examinations, or for the purposes of their profession; (2) religious works, purchased by persons preparing themselves for a prosperous career in another world; and (3) works of fiction, purchased—or rather borrowed from libraries (if they cost more than fourpence-halfpenny<sup>1</sup>) by persons wishing to be amused. It has been my lot to cater for the last of these three classes, and as there is other work which I should have much preferred to do, I will not pretend that I have found, or find, the occupation altogether congenial, perhaps because at the bottom of my heart I share some of the British contempt for the craft of story-writing.

I remember a few years ago discussing this matter fully with my friend Mr. Rudyard Kipling, a most eminent practitioner of that craft, and finding that our views upon it were very similar, if not identical. He pointed out, I recollect, that all fiction is in its essence an appeal to the emotions, and that this is not the highest class of appeal. Here, however, we have a subject that might be argued interminably and from many points of view, especially when we bear in mind that there are various classes of imaginative literature. So far as I am concerned the issue is that though I feel myself more strongly drawn to other pursuits, such as administration or politics or even law, I have been

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1911.—Ed.

called upon to earn the bread of myself and others out of a kind of by-product of my brain which chānces to be saleable, namely, the writing of fiction.

It is fortunate for writers that they do not depend wholly upon the verdict of a hundred 'or so of contemporary critics. The history of literature and art goes to show that contemporary criticism seldom makes and never can destroy a reputation ; in short, that Time is the only true critic, and that its verdict is the one we have to fear. It is in the light of this axiom that I proceed to consider my own humble contributions to the sum of romantic literature. I can assure the reader that I approach this not unamusing task without any prejudice in my own favour. The test of work is whether it will or will not live ; whether it contains within itself the vital germ necessary to a long-continued existence.

Now, although it may seem much to claim, my belief is that some of my tales *will* live. Possibly this belief is quite erroneous, in which case in years to come I may be laughed at for its expression. It is obvious also that a great deal of what I have written is doomed to swift oblivion, since, even if it were all equally good, in the crowded days that are to come, days even more crowded than our own, posterity will not need much of the work of any individual. If he is remembered at all it will be by but a few books. The present question is, What chance have I of being so remembered, and I can only hope that my belief in the vitality of at any rate some of my books may be justified.

As it happens with reference to this question of the possible endurance of my work, I am in the position of having a second string to my bow. Years ago I turned my attention to agriculture and to all the

group of problems connected with the land. First I wrote 'A Farmer's Year.' My object in compiling that record—which, if I live, I hope to amplify some day by the addition of a second volume on the same plan—was that in its pages future generations might see a picture of the conditions under which agriculture was practised in England at the end of the nineteenth century.

Afterwards I attempted something much more ambitious, namely, a full account of agricultural and social researches carried out during 'the years 1901 and 1902, which was published under the title of 'Rural England.' To be frank, this description is perhaps a little too inclusive, seeing that all England is not described in the multitudinous pages of my book. It deals, however, with twenty-seven counties and the Channel Islands, or one more than were treated of by Arthur Young a century or so earlier. After this prolonged effort exhaustion overtook me, and I retired to spend an arduous year or so in classifying and writing down my experiences. Even now I have not abandoned the hope of dealing with the remaining counties, and after these with Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, but at my present age I feel that it grows a little faint. The work is too tremendous and, I may add, too costly, since what can be earned from the sale of such volumes will not even suffice to pay their expenses and that of the necessary journeys.

Still I hope that my work may help to show to posterity through the mouths of many witnesses what was the state of the agriculture and the farmers of England at the commencement of the twentieth century. I trust, therefore, that should my novels be forgotten in the passage of years, 'Rural England' and my other books on agriculture may still serve to keep my memory green.

## INTRODUCTION

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Now I will close this introduction and get to my story. I fear that the reader may think it all somewhat egotistical, but unfortunately that is a fault inherent in an autobiography, and one without which it would be more or less futile.

DITCHINGHAM :

*August 10, 1911.*



# THE DAYS OF MY LIFE

## CHAPTER I

### CHILDHOOD

Danish origin of the Haggards—Early history in Herts and Norfolk—H. R. H.'s father and mother—His birth at Bradenham, Norfolk—Early characteristics—First school—Garsington Rectory, Oxon, and Farmer Quatermain—Lively times at Dunkirk—Adventure at Tréport—Cologne—His uncle Fowle.

THERE has always been a tradition in my family that we sprang from a certain Sir Andrew Ogard, or Agard, or Haggard (I believe his name is spelt in all three ways in a single contemporaneous document), a Danish gentleman of the famous Guildenstjerne family whose seat was at Aagaard in Jutland.

About a year ago I visited this place while I was making researches for my book, 'Rural Denmark.' It is a wild, wind-swept plain dotted with tumuli dating from unknown times. There by the old manor house stand the moated ruins of the castle which was burnt in the Peasants' War, I believe when Sir Andrew's elder brother was its lord. Here the Guildenstjerne family remained for generations and in the neighbouring church their arms, which are practically the same as those we bear to-day, are everywhere to be seen.

This Sir Andrew was a very remarkable man. He appears to have come from Denmark with nothing and



to have died possessed of manors in eleven English counties, besides much money and the Danish estate which he seems to have inherited.<sup>1</sup> Also he distinguished himself greatly in the French wars of the time of Henry VI, where he held high command under the Duke of Bedford, whose executor he subsequently became. Moreover, he did not neglect his spiritual welfare, since, together with his father-in-law, Sir John Clifton, he erected one of the towers of Wymondham Church, in which he is buried on the north side of the high altar, and bequeathed to the said church 'a piece of the True Cross and a piece of the Thorns of the Crown.'

I regret to have to add that there is at present no actual proof of the descent of my family from this Sir Andrew. Among the other manors that he possessed, however, was that of Rye in Hertfordshire, where our arms are still to be seen over the gateway of Rye House, which he appears to have built, that afterwards became famous in connection with the celebrated Rye House Plot.

The Haggard family reappears at Ware within a few miles of the Rye House in the year 1561, in the person of a churchwarden and freeholder of the town, which suggests that he was a citizen of some importance. At Ware they remained for about 150 years. To this I can testify, for once finding myself in that town with an hour to spare I went through the registers, in which the name of Haggard occurs frequently. One member of the family, I recollect, had caused a number of his children to be baptised on the same day, Oct. 28, 1688, though whether this was because he suddenly became reconciled to the Church after a period of alienation, or is to be accounted for by a quarrel with the clergyman,

<sup>1</sup> See Carthew's *History of West and East Bradenham*, pp. 87-89.

I cannot tell. Or had the civil wars anything to do with the matter?

Subsequently the family moved to Old Ford House, St. Mary Stratford-le-Bow, where, I believe, they owned property which, if they had kept it, would have made them very rich to-day.

I recollect my father telling me a story of how one of them, I think it must have been John Haggard who died in 1776, my great, great, great-grandfather, sold the Bow property and moved to Bennington in Hertfordshire because of a burglary that took place at his house which seems to have frightened him very much. His son, William Henry, settled in Norwich, and is buried in St. John's Maddermarket in that city. His only son, also named William Henry, my great-grandfather, after living a while at Knebworth, Herts, bought Bradenham Hall in this county of Norfolk. It would seem, oddly enough, that Bradenham once belonged to old Sir Andrew Ogard, or Agard, in right of his wife, but whether this circumstance had or had not anything to do with its purchase by my great-grandfather I cannot say.

His son, William Haggard, like some others of the family, was concerned in banking in Russia, and in 1816 married a Russian lady, the eldest daughter and co-heiress of James Meybohm of St. Petersburg. My father, William Meybohm Rider Haggard, was the eldest child of this union. He was born at St. Petersburg April 19, 1817, and in 1844 married my mother, Ella, the elder daughter and co-heiress of Bazett Doveton, of the Bombay Civil Service, who was born at Bombay in June 1819.

I am the eighth child of the family of ten—seven sons and three daughters—who were born to my father and mother. As it chanced I first saw the light (on

June 22, 1856), not at Bradenham Hall, which at the time was let, but at the Wood Farm on that property whither, on her return from travelling in France, my mother retired to be confined. A few years ago I visited the room in which the interesting event took place. It is a typical farmhouse upper chamber, very pleasant in its way, and to the fact of my appearance there I have always been inclined, rather fancifully perhaps, to attribute the strong agricultural tastes which I believe I alone of my family possess.

Here I will tell you a little story which shows how untrustworthy even contemporary evidence may be. On the occasion of this visit I was accompanied by a friend, Sir Frederick Wilson, and his niece, who were anxious to see my birthplace. Now near to the Wood Farm at Bradenham stands another farm, which for some unknown reason I had got into my head to be the real spot, and as such I showed it to my friends. When I had finished a farmer, the late James Adcock, who was standing by and who remembered the event, ejaculated :

‘What be you a-talking of, Mr. Rider? You weren’t born there at all, you were born yinder.’

‘Of course,’ I said, ‘I remember,’ and led the way to the Wood Farm with every confidence, where I showed the window of the birth-chamber.

As I was doing so an old lady thrust her head out of the said window and called out :

‘Whatever be you a-talking of, Mr. Rider? You weren’t born in this ’ere room, you were born in that room yinder.’

Then amidst general laughter I retired discomfited. Such, I repeat, is often the value of even contemporary evidence, although it is true that in this case James Adcock and the old lady were the real contemporary

witnesses, since a man can scarcely be expected to remember the room in which he was born.

It seems that I was a whimsical child. At least Hocking, my mother's maid, a handsome, vigorous, black-eyed, raw-boned Cornishwoman who spent most of her active life in the service of the family, informed me in after years that nothing would induce me to go to sleep unless a clean napkin folded in a certain way was placed under my head, which napkin I called 'an ear.' To this day I have dim recollections of crying bitterly until this 'ear' was brought to me. Also I was stupid. Indeed, although she always indignantly denied the story in after years, I remember when I was about seven my dear mother declaring that I was as heavy as lead in body and mind.

I fear that I was more or less of a dunderhead at lessons. Even my letters presented difficulties to me, and I well recollect a few years later being put through an examination by my future brother-in-law, the Rev. Charles Maddison Green, with the object of ascertaining what amount of knowledge I had acquired at a day school in London, where we then were living at 24 Leinster Square.

The results of this examination were so appalling that when he was apprised of them my indignant father burst into the room where I sat resigned to fate, and, in a voice like to that of an angry bull, roared out at me that I was 'only fit to be a greengrocer.' Even then I wondered mildly why this affront should be put upon a useful trade. After the row was over I went for a walk with my brother Andrew who was two years older than myself and who, it appeared, had assisted at my discomfiture from behind a door. Just where Leinster Square opens into a main street, I think it is Westbourne Grove—at any rate in those

days Whiteley had a single little shop not far off at which my mother used to deal—there is, or was, a fruit and vegetable store with no glass in the window. My brother stood contemplating it for a long while. At last he said :

‘I say, old fellow, when you become a greengrocer, I hope you’ll let me have oranges cheap!’

To this day I have never quite forgiven Andrew for that most heartless remark.

After all it was not perhaps strange that I did not learn much at these London day schools—for I went to two of them. The first I left suddenly. It was managed by the head master and an usher whose names I have long forgotten. The usher was a lanky, red-haired, pale-faced man whom we all hated because of his violent temper and injustice. On one occasion when his back was turned to the class to which I belonged, that I presume was the lowest, I amused myself and my companions by shaking my little fists at him, whereon they laughed. The usher wheeled round and asked why we were laughing, when some mean boy piped out :

‘Please, sir, because Haggard is shaking his fists at you.’

He called me to him and I perceived that he was trembling with rage.

‘You young brute!’ he said, ‘I’ll see you in your grave before you shake your fists at me again.’

Then he doubled his own and, striking me first on one side of the head and then on the other, knocked me all the way down the long room and finally over a chair into a heap of slates in a corner, where I lay a while almost senseless. I recovered and went home. Here my eldest sister Ella, noticing my bruised and dazed condition, cross-examined me till I told her the

truth. An interview followed between my father and the master of the school, which resulted in the dismissal of the usher and my departure. Afterwards I met that usher in the Park somewhere near the Row, and so great was my fear of him that I never stopped running till I reached the Marble Arch.

After this my father sent me to a second day school where the pupils were supposed to receive a sound business education.

Then came the examination that I have mentioned at the hands of my brother-in-law. As a result I was despatched to the Rev. Mr. Graham, who took in two or three small boys (at that time I must have been nine or ten years of age) at Garsington Rectory near Oxford.

The Rectory, long ago pulled down, was a low grey house that once had served as a place of refuge in time of plague for the Fellows of one of the Oxford colleges. Twice, if not three times, in the course of my after life I have revisited this spot; the last occasion being about two years ago. Except that the Rectory has been rebuilt the place remains just the same. There is the old seventeenth-century dovecote and the shell of the ancient pollard elm, in the hollow trunk of which I used to play with a child of my own age, Mrs. Graham's little sister Blanche, who was as fair in colouring as one of her name should be. I believe that she has now been dead many years.

Quite near to the Rectory and not far from the pretty church, through the chancel door of which once I saw a donkey thrust its head and burst into violent brays in the midst of Mr. Graham's sermon, stood a farm-house. The farmer, a long, lank man who wore a smart frock, was very kind to me—I found his grave in the churchyard when last I was there. He was

called Quatermain, a name that I used in 'King Solomon's Mines' and other books in after years. After looking at this farm and the tree nearby which bore walnuts bigger and finer than any that grow nowadays, I went to the new Rectory and there saw working in the garden a tall, thin old man, who reminded me strangely of one whom I remembered over thirty years before.

'Is your name Quatermain?' I asked.

He answered that it was. Further inquiry revealed the fact that he was a younger brother of my old friend, whom I was able to describe to him so accurately that he exclaimed in delight:

'That's him! Why, you *do* bring him back from the dead, and he gone so long no one don't think of him no more.'

To this Garsington period of my childhood I find some allusions in letters received from the wife of my tutor, Mrs. Graham. Like so many ladies' epistles they are undated, but I gather from internal evidence that they were written in the year 1886, a quarter of a century ago. I quote only those passages which give Mrs. Graham's recollections of me as I appeared to her in or about the year 1866. She says, talking of one of my books, 'I could scarcely realize that the little quiet gentle boy who used to drive with me about the Garsington lanes could have written such a very clever book.' In this letter she adds an amusing passage: 'I was told the other day that you had never been abroad yourself but had married a Zulu lady and got all your information from her.'

I suppose it was before I went to Mr. Graham's that we all migrated abroad for a certain period. Probably this was in order that we might economise, though what economy my father can have found

in dragging a tumultuous family about the Continent I cannot conceive. Or perhaps I used to join them during the holidays.

One of the places in which we settled temporarily was Dunkirk, where we used to have lively times. Several of my elder brothers, particularly Jack and Andrew, and I, together with some other English boys, among whom were the sons of the late Professor Andrew Crosse, the scientist, formed ourselves into a band and fought the French boys of a neighbouring lycée. These youths outnumbered us by far, but what we lacked in numbers we made up for by the ferocity of our attack. One of our stratagems was to stretch a rope across the street, over which the little Frenchmen, as they gambolled joyously out of school, tripped and tumbled. Then, from some neighbouring court where we lay in wait, we raised our British war-cry and fell upon them. How those battles raged! To this day I can hear the yells of '*Cochons d'Anglais!*' and the answering shouts of '*Yah! Froggie, allez à votre maman!*' as we hit and kicked and wallowed in the mire.

At last I think the police interfered on the complaints of parents, and we were deprived of this particular joy.

Another foreign adventure that I remember, though I must have been much older then, took place at Tréport. There had been a great gale, and notices were put up forbidding anyone to bathe because of the dangerous current which set in during and after such storms. Needless to say, I found in these notices a distinct incentive to disobedience. Was a British boy to be deterred from bathing by French notices? Never! So I took my younger brother Arthur, and going some way up the beach, where I thought we



should not be observed, we undressed and plunged into the breakers. I had the sense, I recollect, to tell him not to get out of his depth, but for my part I swam through or over the enormous waves and disported myself beyond them. When I tried to return, however, I found myself in difficulties. The current was taking me out to sea. Oh ! what a fight was that—had I not been a good swimmer I could not have lived through it.

I set out for the shore husbanding my strength and got among the huge rollers, fighting my way inch by inch against the tide or undertow. I went under once and struggled up again. I went under a second time, and, rising, once more faced that dreadful undertow. I was nearly done, and seemed to make no progress at all. My brother Arthur was within hailing distance of me, and I thought of calling to him. Then—for my mind kept quite clear all this time—I reflected that as there was no one within sight to whom he could go or shout for assistance, he would certainly try to help me himself, with the result that we should *both* be drowned. So I held my tongue and fought on. Just as everything was coming to an end—for the breakers broke over me continually—my foot struck upon something, I suppose it was a point of rock, and on this something I rested a while. Then, waiting a favourable opportunity, I made a last desperate effort and struggled to the shore, where I fell down exhausted.

As I lay there panting, some coastguards, or whatever they are called, who had observed what was happening through their spy-glasses, arrived at a run and very properly expressed their views in the most strenuous language. Recovering myself at length I sat up and said in my best or worst French :

*' Si je noye, qu'est ce que cela vous fait ? '*

The answer, that even then struck me as very

appropriate, was to the effect that my individual fate did not matter twopence to them, but 'how about the reputation of Tréport as a bathing-place?'

I do not recollect that I dilated upon this little adventure to my relatives, and I am not sure that even my brother, who was four years younger than myself, ever realised how serious had been the crisis.

I suppose that it must have been earlier than this—for as to all these youthful experiences my memory is hazy—that we stayed for a while at Coblenz. I remember being taken a trip up the Rhine that I might study the scenery, and retiring to the cabin to read a story-book. Missing me, my father descended and dragged me out by the scruff of the neck, exclaiming loudly, to the vast amusement of the other passengers :

'I have paid five thalers for you to improve your mind by absorbing the beauties of nature, and absorb them you shall!'

Of Coblenz I recall little except the different colours of the waters of the Moselle and the Rhine. What remains fixed in my memory, however, is the scene of our departure thence by boat. In those days my father wore some false teeth, and, when the steamer was about to start, it was discovered that these teeth were still reposing in a glass upon his dressing-table a mile or more away.

A tumult followed and in the end Hocking, my mother's maid, whom I have already mentioned, was despatched to fetch them in spite of the remonstrances of the captain. Off she went like a racehorse, and then ensued a most exciting time. The captain shouted and rang his bell, the steam whistle blew, and my father shouted also, much more loudly than the captain, whilst I and the remainder of the family giggled in the background. A crisis supervened. The captain

would wait no longer and ordered the sailors to cast off. My father in commanding tones ordered them to do nothing of the sort. The steam whistle sent up one continual scream. At last the ropes were loosed, when suddenly bounding down the street that led to the quay, her dress well above her knees and waving the false teeth in her hand, appeared Hocking. Then the captain and my father congratulated each other with a courtly flourish, the latter arranged the false teeth in their proper home, the boat started and peace reigned for a little while.

I think that it was at Cologne that we had a supper party, a considerable affair—for wherever we went there seemed to be a large number of people whom we knew. Among them was an aunt of mine, Mrs. Fowle, my father's sister, who is still living to-day at a great age, although her husband, the Rev. Mr. Fowle, who was then with her, has long been dead. To her I am indebted for the following story of which personally I have no recollection. It appears that when the preliminary party or whatever it may have been was over, and at the appointed time the company trooped in to supper, they were astonished to find a single small boy, to wit myself, seated at the end of the table and just finishing an excellent meal.

'Rider,' said my father in tones of thunder, 'what are you doing here? Explain, sir! Explain!'

'Please, father,' I answered in a mild voice, 'I knew that when you all came in there would be no room for me, so I had my supper first.'

My uncle Fowle was a very humorous man, and the following is an instance of his readiness. While in France an excited Frenchman rushed up to him at a railway station ejaculating, 'Mouton—Monsieur Mouton, n'est-ce pas?'

'Non,' replied my uncle quietly, '*Poulet, moi—Poulet !*'

When at last he was dying on a certain Christmas Eve, the servants were sent for and filed past his bed bidding him farewell. When it came to the cook's turn, that worthy person, losing her head in the solemnity of the moment, bobbed a curtsey and said in a cheerful voice :

'A merry Christmas to you, sir—I wish you a merry Christmas.'

It is reported that a twinkle of the old humour came into my uncle's eye, and a faint smile flickered on his face. The tale is of a sort that he would have delighted to tell.

One more story :

Somewhere about the year 1868, my brother Andrew and I were staying at Brinsop Rectory with my uncle and aunt Fowle. He was a generous man, and, when we boys departed after such visits, used to present us with what he called an 'honorarium,' or in other words a tip. On this occasion, however, no 'honorarium' was forthcoming, but in place of it he gave us a sealed envelope which we were strictly charged not to open until we reached a certain station on the line. To this day I can see the pair of us fingering the envelope in the railway carriage in the happy certainty that Uncle Fowle had surpassed himself by presenting us with what the thin feel of the paper within assured us was a £5 note !

The station was reached at last and we tore open the envelope. From it emerged a sheet of blue paper on which were inscribed two texts, those beginning with : 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?' and 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.' We stared at each other blankly, for the

state of our finances was such that we had counted on that tip and did not quite appreciate this kind of holy joke.

Oddly enough this piece of blue paper has chanced to survive all the wanderings of my life ; as I write I hold it in my hand. Would that I had acted more closely upon the advice which it conveys !

## CHAPTER II

### YOUTH

Bradenham Hall—Let to Nelson's sister—Mr. W. M. R. Haggard, father of H. R. H.—Chairman of Quarter Sessions—His factotum Samuel Adcock—Rows at Bradenham—Their comical side—Mrs. W. M. R. Haggard—Her beautiful character and poetic nature—Entrance examination for Army—Floored in Euclid—Hunting and shooting at Bradenham—Ipswich Grammar School—Fight with big boy—Dr. Holden, head master—Left Ipswich to cram for F.O. at Scoones'—Life in London—Spiritualist séances—First love affair—Left Scoones' for Natal on Sir Henry Bulwer's staff.

BRADENHAM HALL, in West Norfolk, is a beautifully situated and comfortable red-brick house surrounded by woods. It was built about a hundred and fifty years ago, and my family have resided there for four generations. The only noteworthy piece of history connected with the house is that it was hired by Mr. Bolton, the husband of Nelson's sister, who on more than one occasion asked Lady Hamilton there to stay with them. When I was a young fellow, I knew an old man in the village called Canham who at that time was page boy at the Hall. He remembered Lady Hamilton well, and when I asked him to describe her, said, 'She waur a rare fine opstanding [here followed an outspoken and opprobrious term], she waur !'

I may add that in my youth the glory of her ladyship's dresses was still remembered in the village. After the battle of Trafalgar, Nelson's personal belongings seem to have been sent from the *Victory* to Bradenham. At any rate old Canham told me that

it was his duty to hang out certain of the Admiral's garments to air upon the lavender bushes in the kitchen garden. A piece of furniture from his cabin now stands in the room that Lady Hamilton occupied. Honoria; Canham described as 'a pale little slip of a thing.'

Notwithstanding his somewhat frequent excursions abroad and certain years that we spent at Leamington and in London when economy was the order of the day, my father passed most of his life at Bradenham, to which he was devotedly attached. He was a barrister, but I do not think that he practised to any great extent, probably because he had no need to do so. Still I have heard several amusing stories (they may be apocryphal) concerning his appearance as an advocate. One of these I remember; the others have escaped me. He was prosecuting a man for stealing twelve hogs, and in addressing the jury did his best to bring home to them the enormity of the defendant's crime.

'Gentlemen of the Jury,' he said, 'think what this man has done. He stole not one hog but twelve hogs, and not only twelve hogs but twelve fat hogs, exactly the same number, Gentlemen of the Jury, as I see in the box before me!'

The story adds that the defendant was acquitted! However, my father turned his legal lore to some practical use, for he became a Chairman of Quarter Sessions for Norfolk, an office which he held till his death over forty years later. He used to conduct the proceedings with great dignity, to which his appearance—for he was a very handsome man, better looking indeed than any of his sons—and his splendid voice added not a little.

Most of us have inherited the voice though not to the same degree. Indeed it has been a family



H.R.H. AS A YOUTH

*(From a pencil sketch.)*





characteristic for generations, and my father told me that once as a young man he was recognised as a Haggard by an old lady who had never seen him and did not know his name, merely by the likeness of his voice to that of his great-grandfather who had been her friend in youth. Never was there such a voice as my father's; moreover he was wont to make use of it. It was a joke concerning him, which I may have originated, that if he was in the city of Norwich and anyone wished to discover his whereabouts, all they needed to do was to stand in the market-place for a while to listen. Here is a tale of that voice.

My youngest brother Arthur, now Major Haggard, had been lunching with him at the Oxford and Cambridge Club in Pall Mall, and after luncheon bade him farewell on the steps of the club and went his ways, to Egypt, I believe. Presently he heard a roar of 'Arthur! Arthur!' and not wishing to attract attention to himself, quickened his steps. It was the very worst thing that he could do, for the roars redoubled. Arthur began to run, people began to stare. Somebody cried 'Stop thief!' Arthur, now followed by a crowd in which a policeman had joined, ran harder till he was brought to a stop by the sentry at Marlborough House. Then he surrendered and was escorted by the crowd back to the Oxford and Cambridge Club. As he approached, my father bellowed out:

'Don't forget to give my love to your mother.'

Then amidst shouts of laughter he vanished into the club, and Arthur departed to catch the train to Bradenham, *en route* for Egypt.

My father was a typical squire of the old sort, a kind of Sir Roger de Coverley. He reigned at Bradenham like a king, blowing everybody up and making rows innumerable. Yet I do not think there was a

more popular man in the county of Norfolk. Even the servants, whom he rated in a fashion that no servant would put up with nowadays, were fond of him. He could send back the soup with a request to the cook to drink it all herself, or some other infuriating message. He could pull at the bells until feet of connecting wire hung limply down the wall, and announce when whoever it was he wanted appeared that Thorpe Idiot Asylum was her proper home, and so forth. Nobody seemed to mind in the least. It was 'only the Squire's way,' they said.<sup>1</sup>

It was the same with the outdoor men, especially with one Samuel Adcock, his factotum, a stout, humorous person whose face was marked all over with small-pox pits. About once a week Samuel was had in to the vestibule and abused in a most straightforward fashion, but he never seemed to mind.

'I believe, Samuel,' roared my father at him in my hearing, 'donkey as you are, you think that no one can do anything except yourself.'

'Nor they can't, Squire,' replied Samuel calmly, which closed the conversation.

On another occasion there was a frantic row about a certain pheasant which was supposed to have come to its end unlawfully. My father had ordered this fowl to be stuffed that it might be produced in some pending legal proceedings. Samuel, who I think at that time was head-keeper and probably knew more about the pheasant's end than my father, did not pay the slightest attention to these commands. Then came the row.

'Don't you argue with me, sir,' said my father to

<sup>1</sup> No doubt some of the characteristics of Squire De la Mole and his factotum George in Sir Rider's Norfolk tale *Colonel Quaritch, V.C.*, can be traced to Mr. W. M. R. Haggard and his servant Sam Adcock.—Ed.

Samuel, who for the last ten minutes had been sitting silent with his eyes fixed upon the ceiling. 'Answer me without further prevarication. Have you obeyed my orders and had that pheasant stuffed?'

'Lor'! Squire,' replied Samuel, 'you stuffed it yourself a week ago!'

On inquiry it transpired that Samuel, to prevent further complications and awkward questions, had prevailed upon the cook to roast that pheasant and send it up for my parent's dinner. So the lawsuit was dropped.

My father was regular in attendance at church. We always sat in the chancel on oak benches originally designed for the choir. If he happened to be in time himself and other parishioners, such as the farmers' daughters, happened to be late, his habit was, when he saw them enter, to step into the middle of the nave, produce a very large old watch which I now possess—for on his death-bed he told Hocking to give it to me—and hold it aloft that the sinners as they walked up the church might become aware of the enormity of their offence.

He always read the Lessons and read them very well. There were certain chapters, however, those which are full of names both in the Old and New Testaments, which were apt to cause difficulty. It was not that he was unable to pronounce these names, for having been a fair scholar in his youth he did this better than most. Yet when he had finished the list it would occur to him that they might have been rendered more satisfactorily. So he would go back to the beginning and read them all through again.

At the conclusion of the service no one in the church ventured to stir until he had walked down it slowly and taken up his position on a certain spot in

the porch. Here he stood and watched the congregation emerge, counting them like sheep.

Notwithstanding his hot temper, foibles and tricks of manner, there was something about him that made him extraordinarily popular, not only as I have said in his household but in the outside world. Thus I remember that once the Liberals (needless to say he was the strongest of Conservatives) offered not to contest the division if he would consent to represent it. This, however, with all the burden of his large family on his back he could not afford to do. It is a pity, for I am sure that his strong personality, backed as it was by remarkable shrewdness, would have made him a great figure in the House of Commons and one who would have been long remembered.

In many ways he was extraordinarily able, though, if one may say so of a man who was so very much a man, his mind had certain feminine characteristics that for aught I know may have come to him with his Russian blood. Thus I do not think that he reasoned very much. He jumped to conclusions as a woman does, and those conclusions, although often exaggerated, were in essence very rarely wrong. Indeed I never knew anyone who could form a more accurate judgment of a person of either sex after a few minutes of conversation, or even at sight. He seemed to have a certain power of summing up the true nature of man, woman or child, though I am sure that he did not in the least know upon what he based his estimate. It must not be supposed, however, that he was by any means shallow or superficial. In any great event his nature revealed an innate depth and dignity; all the noise that he was so fond of making ceased and he became very quiet.

Nobody could be more absolutely delightful than

my father when he chose, and, *per contra*, I am bound to add that nobody could be more disagreeable. His rows with his children were many, and often on his part unjust. One of the causes of these outbreaks was that he seemed unable to realise that children do not always remain children.

Once when I was a young man in Africa—it was just before I was appointed Master of the High Court in the Transvaal—I was very anxious to come home after several years' absence from England, on 'urgent private affairs.' To be frank, I desired to bring a certain love affair to a head by a formal engagement, which there was no doubt I could have done at that time.

For certain reasons, however, it was impossible for me to get leave at the moment. Yet the matter was one that would admit of no delay. In this emergency I went to my chief, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, told him how things stood and obtained a promise from him that if I resigned my appointment in order to visit England, as it was necessary I should do, he would make arrangements to ensure my reappointment either to that or to some other billet on my return.

I suppose that I did not make all this quite clear in my letters home, and almost certainly I did not explain why it was necessary for me to come home. The result was that the day before I started, after I had sent my luggage forward to Cape Town, I received a most painful letter from my father. Evidently he thought or feared that I was abandoning a good career in Africa and about to come back upon his hands. Although it was far from the fact, this view may or may not have been justified. What I hold even now was not justified was the harsh way in which it was expressed. The words I have forgotten, for I destroyed

the letter many years ago, immediately upon its receipt, I think, but the sting of them after so long an absence I remember well enough, though some four-and-thirty years have passed since they were written, a generation ago.

They hurt me so much that immediately after reading them I withdrew my formal resignation and cancelled the passage I had taken in the post-cart to Kimberley *en route* for the Cape and England. As a result the course of two lives was changed. The lady married someone else, with results that were far from fortunate, and the effect upon myself was not good. I know now that all was for the best so far as I am concerned, and in these events I see the workings of the hand of Destiny. Many, I am aware, will think this a hard saying, but from Job down man has found it difficult to escape a certain faith in fatalism which even St. Paul seems to have accepted.

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will,

writes the inspired Shakespeare, and who shall deny that he writes truth? The alternative would seem to be the acceptance of a doctrine of blind chance which I confess I find hideous. Moreover, if it is to prevail, how fearful are our human responsibilities. Because my dear father, who had the interests of all his children so closely at heart, wrote a sharp and testy letter, probably under the influence of some other irritation of which I know nothing, is he to be saddled with the weight of all the consequences of that letter? Or am I to be saddled with those consequences because I was a high-spirited and sensitive young man who took the letter too seriously? If we knew the answers to these questions we should have solved the meaning of the

secret of our lives. But they are hidden by the blackness that walls us in, that blackness in which the sphinx will speak at last—or stay for ever silent.

Meanwhile the moral is that people should be careful of what they put on paper. When we throw a stone into the sea, who knows where the ripple ends?

To return—these rows at Bradenham, ninety-nine out of a hundred of which meant nothing at all, had a very comical side to them. Perhaps they sprang up at table on the occasion of an argument between my father and one of his sons. Then he would rise majestically, announce in solemn tones that he refused to be insulted in his own house, and depart, banging the door loudly behind him. Across the hall he went into the drawing-room and banged that door, out of the drawing-room into the vestibule (here there are two doors, so the bang was double-barrelled), through the vestibule into the garden, if the row was of the first magnitude. If not he banged his way back into the dining-room by the serving entrance, and very probably sat down again in quite a sweet temper, the exercise having relieved his feelings. Especially was this so if the offending son had banged *himself* out of the house by some other route.

Only the other day I examined those Bradenham doors and their hinges. The workmanship of them is really wonderful. After half a century of banging added to their ordinary wear, they are as good as when they were made. We do not see such joinery nowadays.

Considered as a whole it would have been difficult to find a more jovial party than we were at Bradenham in the days of my youth, especially when my father was in a good mood. The noise of course was tremendous, because everybody had plenty to say and



was fully determined that it should not be hidden from the world. In the midst of all this hubbub sat my dearest mother—like an angel that had lost her way and found herself in pandemonium. Not being blest with the Haggard voice, though she had a very sweet one of her own, often and often she was reduced to the necessity of signifying her wishes by signs. Indeed it became a habit of hers, if she needed the salt or anything else, to point to it and beckon it towards her. One of her daughters-in-law once asked my mother how on earth she made herself heard in the midst of so much noise at table.

‘My dear,’ she answered, ‘I *whisper*! When I whisper they all stop talking, because they wonder what is the matter. Then I get my chance.’

Here I will try to give some description of this mother with whom we were blest. Twenty-two years have passed since she left us, but I can say honestly that every one of those years has brought to me a deeper appreciation of her beautiful character. Indeed she seems to be much nearer to me now that she is dead than she was while she still lived. It is as though our intimacy and mutual understanding has grown in a way as real as it is mysterious. Someone says that the dead are never dead to us until they are forgotten, and if that be so, in my case my mother lives indeed. No night goes by that I do not think of her and pray that we may meet again to part no more. If our present positions were reversed, this would please me, could I know of it, and so I trust that this offering of a son’s unalterable gratitude and affection may please her, for after all such things are the most fragrant flowers that we can lay upon the graves of our beloved. The Protestant Faith seems vaguely to inculcate that we should not pray for the dead. If so, I differ from

the Protestant Faith, who hold that we should not only pray for them but to them, that they will judge our frailties with tenderness and will not forget us who do not forget them. Even if the message is delivered only after ten thousand years, it will still be a message that most of us would be glad to hear; and if it is never delivered at all, still it will have been sent, and what can man do more?

I know that my mother believed that such efforts are not in vain, for she was filled with a very earnest faith. After her death, in the drawer of her writing-table were found four lines, feebly inscribed in pencil, which are believed to be the last words she wrote. They are before me now and I transcribe them :

Lo ! in the shadowy valley there He stands ;  
My soul pale sliding down Earth's icy slope  
Descends to meet Him, with beseeching hands  
Trembling with Fear—and yet upraised in Hope.

My mother was married when she was twenty-five years of age, and children came in what ladies nowadays would consider superabundance. The eldest, my sister Ella, was born in Rome in March 1845, while they were still upon a marriage tour, and subsequently, in quick succession, the others followed. The last of us, my brother Arthur, appeared in November 1860—well do I remember my father in a flowered dressing-gown telling us to be quiet because we had a little brother. This allows nearly sixteen years between the eldest and the youngest, including one who came into the world still-born. Although she had ten children living, my mother never ceased to regret this boy, and I remember her crying when she pointed out to me where he was buried in Bradenham churchyard.

My mother never was a beauty in the ordinary

sense of the word, but in youth, to judge by the pictures which I have seen of her (photographs were not then known), she must have been very refined and charming in appearance, and indeed remained so all her life. Her abilities were great ; taking her all in all she was perhaps the ablest woman whom I have known, though she had no iron background to her character ; for that she was too gentle. Her bent no doubt was literary, and had circumstances permitted I am sure she would have made a name in that branch of art to which in the intervals of her crowded life she gravitated by nature. Also she was a good musician, and drew well. Of her mental abilities I have however spoken in a brief memoir which I published as a preface to a new edition of my mother's poem, ' Life and its Author.'

I think that the greatest of her gifts, however, was that of conversation. No more charming companion could be imagined. Also she had the art of drawing the best out of anyone with whom she might be talking, as the sympathetic sometimes can do. In a minute or two she would find which was his or her strongest point and to this turn the conversation. Notwithstanding the tumultuous nature of her life, her illnesses and other distractions, she contrived to read a great deal, and to keep herself *au courant* with all thought movements and the political affairs of the day. Further she did her very best to teach her numerous children the truths of religion, and to lead them into the ways of righteousness and peace. I fear, however, that at times we got beyond her. It is not easy for any woman to follow and direct all the physical and mental developments of a huge and vigorous family who are continually coming and going, first from schools and elsewhere, and later from every quarter of the world.

She never complained, but I cannot think that the life she was called upon to lead was very congenial to her. When young in India, where at that time English ladies were rare, as was natural in the case of one of her charm who was known also to be a considerable heiress, she was much sought after and fêted. Then she returned to England and married, and for her the responsibilities of life began with a vengeance, to cease no more until she died. These indeed were complicated by the fact that a time came when she had to think a good deal about ways and means, especially after my father, who had the passion of his generation for land, insisted upon investing most of her fortune in that security just at the commencement of its great fall in value. Her various duties, including that of house-keeping, of which she was a perfect mistress, left her scarcely an hour to follow her own literary and artistic tastes. All she could do was to give a little attention to gardening, to which she was devoted.

On the whole life at Bradenham must have been very dull for her, especially after the London house was sold and she was settled there more or less permanently. She used to describe to me the wearisome and interminable local dinner-parties to which she was obliged to go in her early married life. The men she met at them talked, she said, chiefly about 'roots,' and for a long while she could not imagine what these roots might be and why they were so interested in them, until at length she discovered that they referred to mangold-wurzel and to turnips, both as crops and as a shelter for the birds which they loved to shoot. One good fortune she had, however: all her children survived her, all were deeply attached to her, and, what is strange in so large a family, none of them went to the bad.

Such was the circle in which I grew up. I think that on the whole I was rather a quiet youth, at any rate by comparison. Certainly I was very imaginative, although I kept my thoughts to myself, which I dare say had a good deal to do with my reputation for stupidity. I believe I was considered the dull boy of the family. Without doubt I was slow at my lessons, chiefly because I was always thinking of something else. Also to this day there are subjects at which I am extremely stupid. Thus, although I rarely forget the substance of anything worth remembering, never could or can I learn anything by heart, and for this reason I have been obliged to abandon the active pursuit of Masonry. Moreover all mathematics are absolutely abhorrent to me, while as for Euclid it bored me so intensely that I do not think I ever mastered the meaning of the stuff.

I think it is fortunate for me that I have never been called upon to face the competitive examinations which are now so fashionable, and, I will add, in my opinion in many ways so mischievous, for I greatly doubt whether I should have succeeded in them. The only one for which I ever entered was that for the Army, which about 1872 was more severe than is now the case. Then I went up almost without preparation, not because I wished to become a soldier but in order to keep a friend company, and was duly floored by my old enemy, Euclid, for which I am very thankful. Had I passed I might have gone on with the thing and by now been a retired colonel with nothing to do, like so many whom I know.

Of those early years at Bradenham few events stand out clearly in my mind. One terrific night, however, when I was about nine years old, I have never forgotten. I lay abed in the room called the Sandwich, and for

some reason or other could not sleep. Then it was that suddenly my young intelligence for the first time grasped the meaning of death. It came home to me that I too must die; that my body must be buried in the ground and my spirit be hurried off to a terrible, unfamiliar land which to most people was known as Hell. In those days it was common for clergymen to talk a great deal about Hell, especially to the young. It was an awful hour. I shivered, I prayed, I wept. I thought I saw Death waiting for me by the library door. At last I went to sleep to dream that I was already in this hell and that the peculiar form of punishment allotted to me was to be continually eaten alive by rats!

Thus it was that I awoke out of childhood and came face to face with the facts of destiny.

My other recollections are mostly of a sporting character. Like the majority of country-bred boys I adored a gun. That given to me was a single-barrelled muzzle-loader. With this weapon I went within an ace of putting an end to my mortal career, contriving in some mysterious way to let it off so that the charge just grazed my face. Also I almost shot my brother Andrew through a fence which it was our habit to hunt for rabbits, one of us on either side, with Jack, a dear terrier dog, working the ditch in the middle.

I did terrible deeds with that gun. Once even, unable to find any other game, I shot a missel-thrush on its nest, a crime that has haunted me ever since. Also I poached a cock-pheasant, shooting it on the wing through a thick oak-tree so that it fell kicking into a pool, whence it was retrieved with difficulty. Also I killed a farmer's best-laying duck. It was in the moat of the Castle Plantation, where I concluded no respectable tame duck would be, and there it died,

with results almost as painful to me as to the duck, which was demonstrated to have about a dozen eggs inside it.

Generally there was a horse or two at Bradenham on which we boys could hunt. One was a mare called Rebecca, a very smart animal that belonged more or less to my brother Bazett, which I overrode or lamed following the hounds, a crime whereof I heard plenty afterwards. The mount that most often fell to my lot, however, was a flea-bitten old grey called Body-Snatcher because of a string-halt so pronounced that, when he came out of the stable he almost hit his hoof against his stomach. As a matter of fact I discovered afterwards from some dealer that Body-Snatcher had in his youth been a two-hundred-guinea horse. Meeting with some accident, he was sold and put into a trap, which he upset, killing one of the occupants, and finally was purchased by my father for a station nag for £15. But when he warmed to his work and the hounds were in full cry, with a light weight like myself upon his back, there was scarcely a horse in the county that could touch him over a stiff fence. What his end was I cannot remember. Sometimes also my father rode, though not in his later years. I recall riding with him down some lane out Swaffham way. Suddenly he turned to me and said, 'When I am dead, boy, you will remember these rides with me.' And so I have.

After my time at Mr. Graham's, of whom I have spoken, came to an end, how or when I do not know, the question arose as to where I should be sent to school. All my five elder brothers, except Jack the sailor, had the advantage of a public school education. William and Bazett went to Winchester, and afterwards to Oxford and Cambridge respectively; Alfred to Haileybury, Andrew to Westminster, and subse-

quently my younger brother Arthur to Shrewsbury and Cambridge. When it came to my turn, however, funds were running short, which is scarcely to be wondered at, as my father has told me that about this time the family bills for education came to £1200 a year. Also, as I was supposed to be not very bright, I dare say it was thought that to send me to a public school would be to waste money. So it was decreed that I should go to the Grammar School at Ipswich, which had the advantages of being cheap and near at hand.

Never shall I forget my arrival at that educational establishment, to which my father conducted me. We travelled *via* Norwich, where he bought me a hat. For some reason best known to himself, the head-gear which he selected was such as is generally worn by a curate, being of the ordinary clerical black felt and shape. In this weird head-dress I was duly delivered at Ipswich Grammar School. As soon as my father had tumultuously departed to catch his train, I was sent into the playground, where I stood a forlorn and lanky figure. Presently a boy came up and hit me in the face, saying :

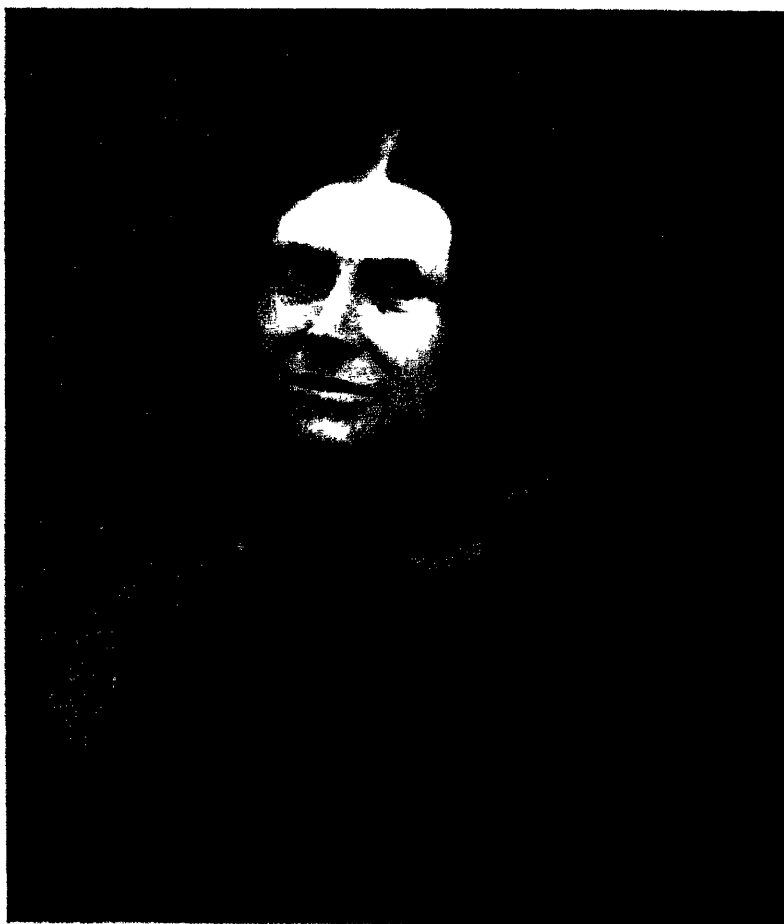
‘Phillips’ (I think that was his name) ‘sends this to the new fellow in a parson’s hat.’

This was too much for me, for underneath my placid exterior I had a certain amount of spirit.

‘Show me Phillips,’ I said, and a very big boy was pointed out to me.

I went up to him, made some appropriate repartee to his sarcasm about my hat, and hit him in the face. Then followed a fight, of which, as he was so much larger and stronger, of course I got the worst. However, I gained the respect of my schoolfellows, and thenceforth my clergyman’s hat was tolerated until I managed to procure another.





"MY MOTHER"

in thinking of other things than the lesson in hand. Moreover in those times boys did not receive the individual attention that is given to them now, even in the Board schools. The result was that the bent of such abilities as I may possess was never discovered. On one occasion, however, I did triumph.

Mr. Saunderson offered a special prize to the boy who could write the best descriptive essay on any subject that he might select. I chose that of an operation in a hospital. I had never been in a hospital or seen an operation, so any information I had upon the matter must have come from reading. Still I beat all the other essayists hollow and won the prize. This, as it chanced, I never received, for when I returned to school after the holidays, Mr. Saunderson had forgotten all about the matter, and I did not like to remind him of it.

I took my part in the school games and was elected captain of the second football team, but did not stay long enough at Ipswich to get into the first. Not much more returns to me about this period of my life that is worthy of record. Although I believe that I was popular among my schoolmates, who showed their affection by naming me 'Nosey' in allusion to the prominence of that organ on my undeveloped face, I did not care for school, and found it monotonous, with the result that my memories concerning it are somewhat of a blur. •

I know of no more melancholy experience than to return to such a place after the lapse of forty years or more, and look on the old familiar things and find moving among them scarcely a living creature whom we knew. I remember telling my audience on the occasion to which I have alluded above, that to me the room seemed to be full of ghosts. Some of the boys laughed,

for they thought that I was joking, but a day may come, say towards the year 1950, when they too will return and stand as I did surveying an utterly alien crowd, and then, perhaps, they will remember my words and understand their meaning. Some tradition of me remained in the place, for one of the elder boys took me to the room that was my study, and showed me the first two initials of my name, 'H. R.,' cut upon the mantelpiece. Although I was in a great hurry to catch the train, I made shift to add the remaining 'H.'

There was a good deal of fighting at Ipswich, in which I took my share. I remember being well licked by a boy who was aggrieved because I had ducked him while we were swimming together in the river. When his challenge to battle was accepted, and we came to fight it out, I discovered that he was left-handed, which puzzled me altogether. However, I fought on till my eyes were bunged up and we were separated. One of the biggest boys of the school, a fine young man, was a great bully and, unknown to the masters, used to cruelly maltreat those who were smaller and weaker than himself. This lad became a clergyman, and, as it happened, in after years I struck his spoor in a very remote part of the world. He had been chaplain there, and left no good name behind him. More years went by and I received a letter from him, the gist of which was to ask me what land and climate I could recommend to him to ensure a quick road to the devil. I think I replied that West Africa seemed to fulfil all requirements, but whether he ever reached either the first or the second destination I do not know. Poor fellow! I am sorry for him. He was clever and handsome, and might have found a better fate. I have heard, however, that he made a disastrous marriage, which often takes men more

quickly to a bad end than does or did even the hinterland of West Africa.

While I was still at Ipswich I spent a summer holiday in Switzerland when I was about sixteen, lodging with a foreign family in order to improve my French. With the able assistance of the young ladies of the house I acquired a good colloquial knowledge of that language in quite a short time. I never saw any of them again. When my visit was over I joined the rest of my family at Fluelen on the Lake of Lucerne. Thence my brother Andrew and I walked to the top of the St. Gothard Pass, there to bid farewell to our brother Alfred, who was crossing the Alps in a diligence on his way to India at the commencement of his career. We slept the night at some wayside inn. On the following morning the pretty Swiss chambermaid, with whom we had made friends, took us to a mortuary near by and, among a number of other such gruesome relics, showed us the skull of her own father, which she polished up affectionately with her apron.

At the top of the pass we met my brother and my father, who had accompanied him so far. The diligence drove off, we shouting our farewells, my father waving a tall white hat out of which, to the amazement of the travellers, fell two towels and an assortment of cabbage leaves and other greenery. It was like a conjuring trick. I should explain that the day was hot, and my parent feared sunstroke.

I think that I remained at Ipswich for only one term after this trip abroad. Then, in the following holidays, with characteristic suddenness my father made up his mind that I was to leave, so Ipswich knew me no more. It was at this period that my father determined that I should go up for the Foreign Office, and, with a view to preparing for the examination,

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I was sent to a private tutor in London, a French professor who had married one of my sister's school-mistresses. He was a charming man, and she was a charming woman, but, having married late in life, they did not in the least assimilate. For one thing, his religious views were what are called broad, whereas she belonged to the Society of Plymouth Brethren, whose views are narrow. She told him that he would go to hell. He intimated in reply that, if she were not there, that fate would have its consolations. In short, the rows were awful. I never knew a more ill-assorted pair. I think that I stopped with these good people for about a year, imbibing some knowledge of French literature, and incidentally of the tenets of the Plymouth Brethren. Then my father announced that I was to go to Scoones, the great crammer, and there make ready to face the Foreign Office examination.

To this end, when I was just eighteen, I was put in lodgings alone in London, entirely uncontrolled in any way. The first set of these lodgings was somewhere near Westbourne Grove and kept by a young widow. As they did not turn out respectable I was moved to others in Davies Street, an excellent situation for a young gentleman about town. Be it remembered that this happened at a time of life when youths nowadays are either still at school or just gone up to College, where they have the advantage of effective guidance and control for some years. At this age I was thrown upon the world, as I remember when I was a little lad my elder brothers threw me into the Rhine to teach me to swim. After nearly drowning I learned to swim, and in a sense the same may be said of my London life.

There is a kind Providence that helps some people through many dangers, although unfortunately it

seems to abandon others to their fate. In my case it helped me through.

Among the risks I ran were those attendant upon spiritualism. Somehow or other, I have not the faintest recollection how, I became a frequent visitor at the house of old Lady Paulet, No. 20 Hanover Square. She was a great spiritualist, and I used to attend her séances. Undoubtedly very strange things happened at these séances which I will not stop to describe. Among the other habitués of the 'circle' was Lady Caithness, who wore a necklace of enormous diamonds. When the lights were turned down these diamonds were the last objects visible. They gleamed alone, and seemed to be hung on air. On these occasions a lady called Mrs. Guppy was the great medium. On Mrs. Guppy I and a confederate used to play jokes. For instance, one of the manifestations was that the table suddenly became covered with great quantities of roses wet with dew. Off these roses my friend and I, having unlinked our hands, broke a number of fat, hard buds and, knowing where she was sitting, discharged them through the darkness with all our strength straight at the head of Mrs. Guppy. Little wonder that presently we heard that poor lady exclaim :

' Oh ! the spirits are hurting me so.'

I think it was Lady Caithness who made a somewhat similar remark when, in the course of my investigation of certain phenomena that were happening underneath the table in connection with some musical glasses that seemed to be emitting their plaintive strains from between my feet, I landed her a most severe kick upon the shins.

It was all very amusing, and would have done no harm had the business stopped there. But it did not.



Before I leave 20 Hanover Square, however, I may mention that more than a quarter of a century afterwards I revisited it under strangely different circumstances. The house is now the home of various societies, and in the offices of one of these societies I was called upon to preside as Chairman of the Committee of the Society of Authors upon the occasion of a General Meeting. Of course everything was changed, but it seemed to me that I recognised the marble mantelpieces.

My acquaintance with Lady Paulet gave me the entrée to the spiritualistic society of the day. Perhaps some of them had hopes that I might develop into a first-class medium. Among the séances that I attended were some at a private house in Green Street. Here I witnessed remarkable things. The medium was a young lady, not merely in the conventional sense of the term, who evidently believed in her mission and was not paid. She sank into a trance secured by many tests, and 'strange things happened' or seemed to happen. Thus, to leave out the minor manifestations, two young women of great beauty—or perhaps I should say young spirits—one dark and the other fair, appeared in the lighted room. I conversed with and touched them both, and noted that their flesh seemed to be firm but cold. I remember that, being a forward youth of inquiring mind, I even asked the prettier of the two to allow me to give her a kiss. She smiled but did not seem to be at all annoyed, but I never got the kiss. I think she remarked that it was not permissible.

She was draped in a kind of white garment which covered her head, and I asked her to allow me to see her hair. She pushed up the white drapery from her forehead, remarking sweetly that if I would look I

should see that she had no hair, and in fact she appeared to be quite bald. A minute or two later, however, she had long and beautiful hair which flowed all about her.

Afterwards either she or the other apparition remarked that she was tired. Thereon her body seemed to shrink, with the result that, as her head remained where it was, the neck elongated enormously, after the fashion of Alice in Wonderland. Then she fell backwards and vanished altogether.

To this day I wonder whether the whole thing was illusion, or, if not, what it can have been. Of one thing I am certain—that spirits, as we understand the term, had nothing to do with the matter. On the other hand I do not believe that it was a case of trickery; rather am I inclined to think that certain forces with which we are at present unacquainted were set loose that produced phenomena which, perhaps, had their real origin in our own minds, but nevertheless were true phenomena.

Sometimes these phenomena were purely physical. Thus I and some other of the Scoones students' arranged a séance at the house of the uncle of one of them in St. James's Place, where no such thing had ever been held before. The medium, a feeble little man, whose name, I think, was Edwards, arrived and at the door was pounced upon by two of the strongest young men present, who never let go of him until the end of the proceedings. These were various and tumultuous. We sat in the darkened dining-room round the massive table, which presently began to skip like a lamb. Lights floated about the room, and with them a file of *Morning Posts* which normally reposed in a corner. Cold little hands picked at the studs in our shirts, and the feather fans off the mantelpiece floated to and fro,

performing their natural office upon our heated brows. Our host, Mr. Norris, whispered to me that he was receiving these attentions.

'Catch hold of the thing,' I said, letting go of his hand.

He did so and thrust his fingers through the leather loop of the fan. Then followed a great struggle, for somebody or something located near the ceiling strove to tear it away from him.

'Stick to it,' I said, and there followed a crack.

'Confound them! they have broken my fan,' said Mr. Norris, and passed me the round and carved ivory handle, which I felt so distinctly that I could have sworn that it was separated from the feather top. I gave it back to him and he threw it down upon the table, remarking that as the 'spirits' had broken it they might as well mend it again. When the light was turned on later there before him lay the fan—but unbroken and even unruffled.

This was curious but by no means the cream of the proceedings. We became aware that heavy articles were on the move, and the light showed us that we were not mistaken. There in the centre of the dining-table, piled one upon the other, like Ossa upon Pelion, were the two massive dining-room arm-chairs, and on the top of these, reaching nearly to the ceiling, appeared Mr. Norris's priceless china candelabra.

How were those massive chairs, which it would have taken two skilled and careful men to lift to that height, passed over our heads without our knowing it and set one upon another? Even if the medium, who as I have said was held by the two strongest of the sitters, friends of my own who were above suspicion, were free, he could never have lifted those chairs. Even if he had had a confederate they could never have lifted

them, and certainly could not have arranged the china upon the top of the pile.

I gave it up then and, after assuring the reader that these things happened exactly as stated, I give it up now. All I can do is to fall back upon my hypothesis that some existent but unknown force was let loose which produced these phenomena.

Whatever may be the true explanation, on one point I am quite sure, namely that the whole business is mischievous and to be discouraged. Bearing in mind its effect upon my own nerves, never would I allow any young person over whom I had control to attend a séance. I am well aware that there are many different grades of spiritualism. The name covers such occurrences as I have described and the researches of wise scientists like Sir Oliver Lodge. Lastly, there is an even higher variant of preternatural experience to which it may be applied—I mean that of the communion of the individual soul still resident on earth with other souls that have passed from us ; this, too, without the intervention of any medium, but as it were face to face in those surrounding solitudes that, unless we dream—as is possible, for the nerves and imagination play strange tricks—from time to time they find the strength to travel.

In short, spiritualism should be left to the expert and earnest investigator, or become the secret comfort of such few hearts as can rise now and again beyond the world, making as it were their trial flights towards that place where, as we hope, their rest remaineth. To most people that door should remain sealed, for beyond it they will find only what is harmful and unwholesome.

Since those days nearly forty years ago I have never attended a séance, nor do I mean ever to do so more.

During this time that I was at Scoones' a great event happened. I fell truly and earnestly in love. If all goes well, this, I suppose, is one of the best things that can occur to a young fellow. It steadies him and gives him an object in life : someone for whom to work. If all goes ill, it is one of the worst, for then the reverse is apt to come about. It unsteadies him, makes him reckless, and perhaps throws him in the way of undesirable adventures. In my case, in the end all went wrong, or seemed to do so at the time.

I was taken by a friend to a ball at Richmond ; who gave it I have long forgotten. There I saw a very beautiful young lady a few years older than myself to whom I was instantly and overwhelmingly attracted. I say beautiful advisedly, for to my mind she was one of the three really lovely women whom I have seen in my life. The second was the late Duchess of Leinster, and the third was a village girl at Bradenham who was reported to be the daughter of a gentleman. She, poor thing, died quite young.

At length the ball came to an end and I escorted this lady to her carriage—she was driving back to London alone—with the intelligent object of ascertaining where she lived. In this, by the way, I failed ; either I did not catch the address or it was too vague and general. Ultimately, however, I overcame that difficulty by a well-directed inquiry at a butcher's shop in what I knew to be the neighbourhood. It occurred to me that even goddesses must eat.

The reason that I mention this matter is that a curious coincidence is connected with it. The house where the ball took place had a garden in front, down which garden ran a carpeted path. At the end of the path a great arch had been erected for the occasion, and through this arch I followed the young lady.

Some thirty-five years later I was present at her death-bed—for happily I was able to be of service to her in her later life—and subsequently, with my wife, who had become her friend many years before, was one of the few mourners at her funeral. At the church where this took place it is the custom to carry out coffins through the big western door. As I followed hers the general aspect of the arch of this door reminded me of something, at the moment I could not remember what. Then it came back to me. It was exactly like that other arch through which I had followed her to her carriage on the night when first we met. Also, strangely different as were the surroundings, there were accessories, floral and other, that were similar in their general effect.

I think I was about a year and a half at Scoones', making many friends, collecting many experiences and some knowledge of the world. How much book knowledge I collected I do not now know, nor whether I should have passed for the Foreign Office if I had gone up. But it was not fated that I should do so. In the summer vacation of 1875 I went to join my family, whom, in the course of one of his continental expeditions, my father had settled for a while at Tours. I travelled *via* Paris, which I found looking almost itself again. On the last occasion that I had visited it the Column Vendôme was lying shattered on the ground, the public statues were splashed over with the lead of bullets, and great burnt-out buildings stared at me emptily. I remember a young Frenchman whom I knew taking me to a spot backed by a high wall where shortly before he had seen, I think he said, 300 Communists executed at once. He told me that the soldiers fired into the moving heap until at length it grew still. On the wall were the marks of their bullets.

At Tours I did not live with my family, but with an old French professor and his wife—I think their name was Demeste—in order that I might pursue my studies of the language.

Whilst I was at Tours, making expeditions with the others to see old castles and so forth, my father saw in the *Times*, or heard otherwise, that Sir Henry Bulwer had been appointed to the Lieutenant-Governorship of Natal. Now my father was a man of ideas who never lost a chance of finding an opening for one of his sons, and the Bulwers of Heydon in Norfolk were, as it happened, old friends of our family. So he wrote off at once and asked Sir Henry if he would take me with him to Africa on his staff. Sir Henry assented, which was extremely kind of him, as I do not remember that he had ever set eyes on me.

Accordingly in a week or two Scoones' and the Foreign Office had faded into the past, and I reported myself to my future chief in London, where he set me to work at once ordering wine and other stores to be consumed at Government House in Natal.

## CHAPTER III

### NATAL

Leave for South Africa with Sir Henry Bulwer—Arrive Cape Town—Government House—Lady Barkly—Bishop Colenso—Go on to Durban—Then to Pietermaritzburg—Reception of Sir H. Bulwer there—Sir George Colley—Duties of H. R. H. at Government House—Buck-hunting—Journey up-country to Weenen—Zulu customs—Witch-finding—Pagaté's kraal—Great native war-dance—Lost in bush—Saved by Kaffir—More about Bishop Colenso—Sir Theophilus Shepstone—His friendship for H. R. H.—His character and policy—Captain Cox.

HERE I ought to say a few words about Sir Henry Bulwer, who, I am glad to say, is still living, and whom I often meet at the Athenæum Club. Indeed, within the last few months he has read a book of mine named 'Marie' in proof, which book I have dedicated to him. I was anxious that he should read it, for he is an old man, and who knows whether he will be alive when it is published a year or so hence!

For Sir Henry Bulwer I have and always shall retain the greatest affection and regard; indeed, he is my beau-ideal of what an English gentleman should be. Also his kindness to me was great. When first I knew him some thirty-six years ago, he was about forty, and an extremely able public servant, who had received his training in various Colonial appointments. He was most painstaking and careful in all his methods, but to me his weak point seemed to be that he always saw so much of both sides of the case that he found it difficult to make up his mind which of them he ought to follow.



My farewells were hurried. I find among the few documents that I have preserved of this period one from my mother which is signed by all the members of the family who were at Tours, wishing me good fortune and good-bye. Also—and this is more valuable—there is a copy of some verses which she addressed to me. These I quote below.

TO MY SON RIDER

*(On leaving home. July 1875)*

And thus, my son, adown Life's vernal tide  
Light drifting, hast thou reached her troublous sea,  
Where never more thy bark may idly glide,  
But shape her course to gain the far To be !

Rise to thy destiny ! Awake thy powers !  
Mid throng of men enact the man's full part !  
No more with mists of doubt dim golden hours,  
But with strong Being fill thine eager heart !

Nineteen short summers o'er thy youthful head  
Have shone and ripened as they flitted by :  
May their rich fruit o'er coming years be shed,  
And make God's gift of life a treasury.

That Life is granted, not in Pleasure's round,  
Or even Love's sweet dream, to lapse content :  
Duty and Faith are words of solemn sound,  
And to their echoes must thy soul be bent.

Conscience shall hallow all ; grant noble aim,  
And firm resolve the paths of vice to shun ;  
And haply, in reward, Love's lambent flame  
Through storms of life shall shine, like Earth's fair sun !

But a few days : and far across the flood,  
To stranger lands with strangers wilt thou roam ;  
Yet shall not absence loose the bonds of blood,  
Or still the voices of thy distant home.

So, go thy way, my Child ! I love thee well :  
*How* well, no heart but mother's heart may know—  
Yet One loves better,—more than words can tell,—  
Then trust Him, now and evermore ;—and go !

ELLA HAGGARD.

*July 16, 1875.*

I think them beautiful lines. Moreover they are typical of the writer.

Duty and Faith are words of solemn sound.

Well, duty and faith were the stars by which she guided her own life.

Of our voyage to Africa there is little to be said except that in those days it was long. On arriving at Cape Town we went to Government House, where we stayed for about a week with Lady Barkly.

Government House is, or was, a large, quaint old place—I have not seen it from that day to this—which had the reputation of being haunted by a certain Grey Lady who had lived there generations before in the old Dutch days.

Since these chapters were written some letters of mine have been found at Bradenham. From one of these, dealing with my arrival in South Africa, I will quote some passages :

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,  
CAPE TOWN : *August 18, 1875.*

MY DEAR FATHER,—You will see from the heading of my letter that I have arrived all safe at Cape Town. We have not made a very quick passage, nor yet a very slow one. . . . Among other things we got up a sort of penny reading on board, for which I wrote the Prologue. I also had a good deal of work to do, getting up all the Langalibalele case and extracting the pith from a mass of blue-books. It is not easy to get at the truth when it is hedged round by such a mass of contradictory

evidence. However the whole affair is rather interesting, inasmuch as it gives you an idea of the tremendous state of ferment and excitement the Colony was and still is in. . . .

We arrived here early yesterday morning, expecting to find Sir Garnet Wolseley waiting for us, but he has not yet returned from Natal, which is very awkward, as we do not know whether to wait for him or to go on and meet him there. . . .

I am getting on all right, though my position is not an easy one. I find myself responsible for everything, and everybody comes and bothers me. However it all comes in the day's work. I don't know yet if I am private secretary, but I suppose I am as nobody else has appeared. I make a good many blunders, but still I think I get on very well on the whole. I expect I shall have a tremendous lot of work at Natal as the Chief told me that he was going to entertain a good deal, and all that will fall on my shoulders in addition to business. We are very good friends and shall, I think, continue to be so, as he is not a captious or changeable man. . . . Beaumont, who was secretary to Pine (the late Governor of Natal), puts me up to a lot of things ; he is an excessively nice fellow and we are great allies. . . .

The merchants of Cape Town give a ball to-morrow night to which I am invited. It will be a good opportunity of studying the Cape Town aristocracy. I have just returned from calling on the Bishop. The Barklys have a first-rate four-in-hand and we went through a beautiful country, so our drive was a pleasant one. I like the Bishop very much. He is a thorough specimen of muscular Christianity. . . . This continual influx of strangers has a very depressing effect. There is another big dinner on to-night, and there won't be a soul I know among them unless Beaumont comes, which I devoutly hope he will. All these new faces that you don't know make you think of the old ones that you do know. . . . I hope that you are quite well now, my dear Father, and that you do not miss me as much as I do you.

I remain, with best love to all,

Ever your most affectionate and dutiful son,

H. RIDER HAGGARD (or 'Waggart' as they  
put my name in the paper).

My mother will pity me when I tell her that I've got to get servants. Where on earth am I to find servants, and who am I to ask about them ?

Now before we go on to Natal where the real business of my life began, I will stop for a moment to take stock of myself as I was in those days at the age of nineteen.

I was a tall young fellow, quite six feet, and slight ; blue-eyed, brown-haired, fresh-complexioned, and not at all bad-looking. The Zulus gave me the name of 'Indanda,' which meant, I believe, one who is tall and pleasant-natured. Mentally I was impressionable, quick to observe and learn whatever interested me, and could already hold my own in conversation. Also, if necessary, I could make a public speech. I was, however, subject to fits of depression and liable to take views of things too serious and gloomy for my age—failings, I may add, that I have never been able to shake off. Even then I had the habit of looking beneath the surface of characters and events, and of trying to get at their springs and causes. I liked to understand any country or society in which I found myself. I despised those who merely floated on the stream of life and never tried to dive into its depths. Yet in some ways I think I was rather indolent, that is if the task in hand bored me. I was ambitious and conscious of certain powers, but wanted to climb the tree of success too quickly—a proceeding that generally results in slips.

Further, my eldest sister, Ella (Mrs. Maddison Green), informed me only a month or two ago that at this period I was conceited. Possibly I may have been, for I had been living in a very forcing atmosphere where I was made too much of by some of my elders.

Four or five days' steaming along the green and beautiful coasts of south-eastern Africa, on which the great rollers break continually, brought us to Port Natal. At that time the Durban harbour was not sufficiently dredged to admit sea-going vessels, and I think we had some difficulty in landing. There was a reception committee which presented an address of welcome to the Lieutenant-Governor, and I remember hurriedly copying his answer as the ship rolled off the Point.

Sir Garnet Wolseley had been sent to Natal as temporary Governor to settle certain matters connected with its constitution. I think that at that time he had left the Colony himself, though of this I am not quite sure, as I am unable to remember when I first spoke with him. In after life I met him on several occasions. Especially do I remember a long talk with him at a dinner-party at the house of the Bischoffheims in London some time in the eighties. He was a small, bright-eyed, quick-brained man who expressed his views upon the public matters of the day with a fierceness and a vigour that were quite astonishing. We sat together at the table after all the other guests had left to join the ladies, and I reflected that he must have had singular confidence in my character to say the things he did to me. However, it was justified, for of course I never repeated a word.

Those of the Staff whom I recollect are, or were—for I think they are now all dead—Lord Gifford, Colonel (afterwards Sir Henry) Brackenbury, and Major (afterwards Sir William) Butler. Of these the one who impressed himself most deeply upon my mind was Butler. He was a most agreeable and sympathetic man, who took the trouble to talk a good deal to me,

although I was but a lad. I recall that with much graphic detail he told me the story of how, when he was suffering from fever, he was nearly thrown overboard as a dead man off the West Coast of Africa, where he had been serving in the Ashanti Expedition. Recently I have been reading his very interesting and remarkable autobiography, in which I see he describes this incident.

Subsequently—but I think this was at Pietermaritzburg—I became well acquainted with Colonel (afterwards Sir George) Colley. He stayed with us at Government House, and I remember a curious little incident concerning him.

He was leaving Natal and wished to sell a shot-gun which I wished to purchase, though I am not sure whether this was on my account or on that of Sir Henry Bulwer. We had a difference of opinion as to the price of the article. Finally I interviewed him one morning when he was taking his bath, and he suggested that we should settle the matter by tossing. This I did with a half-sovereign, he giving the call, but who won I forget.

Of my last tragic meeting with poor Colley at the time of the first Boer War I may speak later in this book.

After a short stay at Durban we proceeded to Maritzburg, the seat of government, in some kind of a horse conveyance, as, except for a short line on the coast, there was then no railway in Natal. In those days it was a charming town of the ordinary Dutch character, with wide streets bordered by sluits of running water and planted with gum trees.

Of the year or so that I spent in Natal I have not much to say that is worthy of record. The country impressed me enormously. Indeed, on the whole

I think it the most beautiful of any that I have seen in the world, parts of Mexico alone excepted. The great plains rising by steps to the Quathlamba or Drakensberg Mountains, the sparkling torrential rivers, the sweeping thunderstorms, the grass-fires creeping over the veld at night like snakes of living flame, the glorious aspect of the heavens, now of a spotless blue, now charged with the splendid and many-coloured lights of sunset, and now sparkling with a myriad stars; the wine-like taste of the air upon the plains, the beautiful flowers in the bush-clad kloofs or on the black veld in spring—all these things impressed me, so much that were I to live a thousand years I never should forget them.

Then there were the Zulu Kaffirs living in their kraals filled with round beehive-like huts, bronze-coloured, noble-looking men and women clad only in their *moochas*, whose herds of cattle wandered hither and thither in charge of a little lad. From the beginning I was attracted to these Zulus, and soon began to study their character and their history.

I will quote from a letter to my mother dated Government House, Natal, September 15, 1875.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,--- . . . You will by this time have got my letters from Durban and the Cape. We left Durban at 10 A.M. on the morning of the 1st September and came up the fifty-four miles over most tremendous hills in five and a half hours, going at full gallop all the way, in a four-horse wagonette. There were five of us, the Chief, Mr. Shepstone (Secretary for Native Affairs), Napier Broome (Colonial Secretary), Beaumont and myself. Some of the scenery was very fine, but we were so choked by the dust, which was so thick that you could not see the road beneath you, that we did not much enjoy it. Our guard of honour did not improve matters.

When we got near Maritzburg crowds of people rode out to meet us, and we entered in grand style amidst loud hurrahs. We galloped up to Government House, where the regiment was drawn up on the lawn, and as soon as the carriage stopped the band struck up 'God save the Queen' and salutes were fired from the fort. Then all the grandees of Maritzburg came forward and paid their respects to the Governor, and at last we were left alone to clean ourselves as best we could.

The Government House is a very pretty building, not nearly so large as the Cape Government House, but far from small. I, who have to look after it, find it too large. I have a large bedroom upstairs and my office in the Executive Council chamber. The day after we arrived the swearing-in ceremony was held, in a room where the Legislative Council sit in the Public Offices building. It was a very swell ceremony indeed, and I had to go through an extraordinary amount of scraping and bowing, presenting and pocketing, or trying to pocket, enormous addresses, commissions, etc., etc. After it followed a levée, which tried my patience considerably, for these people came so thick and fast that I had no time to decipher their, for the most part, infamously written cards, so I had to shout out their names at haphazard. However, that came to an end too at last, and we drove off amidst loud hurrahs.

I am at last clear on one point: I am not private secretary. The Chief was talking the other night to Beaumont about me and told him he had a very good opinion of me and thought I should do very well, but that he had *always intended* to have an older man to help him *at first*, though who it is going to be does not seem clear. He wants somebody who can go and talk to all these people as a man of their own standing, which I cannot do. He also wants someone who has some experience of this sort of work. I am not in the least disappointed; indeed now that I see something of the place, and of the turbulent character of its inhabitants, I should have much wondered if he had made a fellow young as I am private secretary. Putting the money out of the question I would infinitely rather be rid of the responsibility, at any rate at present. I am sorry, very sorry, still to be dependent on my



father, but you may be sure, my dear Mother, that I will be as moderate as I can. At any rate I shall cost less than if I had been at home. I have now learnt Sir Henry's character pretty well. I know him to be a man of his word, therefore I am pretty well convinced that I shall be his private secretary sooner or later. . . . I continue to get on very well with him, indeed we are the best of friends, and I have many friendly jaws with him. I should rather like to know who No. 1 is going to be, but I don't think he knows himself; he is very reserved on these matters. . . .

Of work I have plenty here, but my chief trouble is my housekeeping. I have all this large house entirely under me, and being new to it find it difficult work. I have often seen with amusement the look of anxiety on a hostess' face at a dinner-party, but, by Jove, I find it far from amusing now. Dinner days are black Mondays to me. Imagine my dismay the other day when the fish did not appear and when, on whispering a furious inquiry, I was told the cook had forgotten it! Servants are very difficult to get here, and one has to pay £5 a month at the lowest.

The next surviving letter is dated February 14, 1876. It gives an account of a buck hunt which is perhaps worth transcribing.

To begin with, I am getting on all right and have quite got over all signs of liver since I got a horse. This place, if only you take exercise, is as healthy as England, but exercise is a *sine qua non*. I got out for a day's buck-hunting the other day to a place about twelve miles off, a farm of fertile plain (about 12,000 acres). The owner of it, a very good fellow, is one of the few people who preserve their buck.

The way you shoot is this: three or four guns on good horses ride over the plain about fifty yards apart. If an oribé gets up, you have to pull up and shoot off your horse's back, which is not very easy till you get used to it. Sometimes you run them as I did, but it wants a very swift horse. I had dropped a little behind the others, when in galloping up to join them my horse put its foot into a hole and came to the ground, sending me and my loaded gun on to my head some five or

six yards further on. I had hardly come to my senses and caught my horse when I saw an oribé pass like a flash of light, taking great bounds. I turned and went away after him, and I must say I never had a more exciting ride in my life. Away we went like the wind, over hill and down dale, and very dangerous work it was, for being all through long grass the holes were hidden. Every now and then I felt my horse give a violent shy or a bound, and then I knew we had nearly got into some bottomless pit; if we had, going at that rate the horse would most likely have broken his legs or I my neck. And so on for about two miles, I gaining very slowly, but still gaining on the buck, when suddenly down he popped into a bush. It is curious how rarely one does the right thing at the right time. If I had done the right thing I should have got my buck—but I didn't. Instead of getting off and walking him up, I sent one barrel into the bush after him and gave him the other as he rose. By this means I hit him very hard but did not kill him. However, I made sure of him and struck the spurs into my horse to catch him. To my surprise he only gave a jump, and I found myself embedded in a bog whilst my wounded buck slowly vanished over a rise. I went back in a sweet temper, as you may imagine.

We also hunt with hounds, and get very good runs sometimes. I very nearly lost my watch and chain in one the other day. I was tearing along at full gallop through the long grass when I thought I felt an extra weight at the end of my whip which was resting on the pommel of my saddle. I looked down and saw my watch and chain hanging to it. It was what one may call a lucky escape. . . . There is little news here of any sort. It is evidently thought in England that Froude made a *fiasco* of his mission, but I believe it was more the fault of the Home Government than his own. The only other thing is that some people fear resistance on the part of the Kaffirs when the time comes for the collection of the new hut tax, but I don't believe in it. . . .

In a letter dated Easter Sunday, 1876, there are some allusions to Bishop Colenso and to the Zulu customs of the day which may be of interest.

There is but little news to tell, none indeed with the exception of the tragedy I mentioned in my letter to my father. Colenso preached a funeral sermon on him this morning, by far the finest I ever heard him preach. He was one of the Bishop's best friends, one who had stood by him when all deserted him. The Bishop quite broke down. I was sitting under him; all the last part of his sermon he was literally sobbing. It was touching to see stern-faced Colenso, whom nothing can move, so broken. He is a very strange man, but one you cannot but admire, with his intellect written on his face. I dare say that my father has met him in Norfolk, where he was a rector; he recognized my name the first time I saw him.

We start for a trip up-country in three days' time; we shall be away until about the 22nd. We are going to explore Weenen or the Land of Weeping, so-called from the weeping of the women and children left alive after the great massacre of the Dutch.

I saw a curious sight the other day, a witch dance. I cannot attempt to describe it, it is a weird sort of thing.

The Chief Interpreter of the Colony told me that he was in Zululand some years ago and saw one of these witch-findings. 'There,' he said, 'were collected some five thousand armed warriors in a circle, in the midst of which the witches [I should have said the witch-doctors] danced. Everyone was livid with fear, and with reason, for now and again one of these creatures would come crooning up to one of them and touch him, whereupon he was promptly put out of the world by a regiment of the king's guard.' My friend interfered and nearly had his own neck broken for his trouble.

The Chief Interpreter alluded to must have been my friend Fynney, now long dead, who was afterwards my colleague on the staff of Sir Theophilus Shepstone. From him I gathered much information as to Zulu customs and history which in subsequent days I made use of in 'Nada the Lily' and other books. There the reader may find a true account of the doings of these

awful witch-doctors. Often I have wondered whether they are merely frauds or whether they do possess, at any rate in certain instances, some share of occult power. Certainly I have known them do the strangest things, especially in the way of discovering lost cattle or other property. On the occasion of which I speak in the letter I remember that the doctress soon discovered an article I thought was gone for ever.

I accompanied Sir Henry on a tour he made up-country and there saw a great war-dance which was organised in his honour. I mention this because the first thing I ever wrote for publication was a description of this dance. I think that it appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Among the new-found letters is one that tells of this war-dance. It is headed Camp, Pagáté's Location, May 13, 1876.

. . . We have since my last letter home been trekking steadily on through the country in much the same way, except that we have left the plains and entered the mountainous bush-land which, though the roads are terrible, is much pleasanter to travel through as it is more varied. Also you can make dives into the bush in search of a little shooting, though it is very necessary to take your bearings first. I neglected to do this the other day, and when I had been off the road five minutes I found I was utterly unable to find it again.

When once you have lost your general direction you are done for. I wandered on and on till at length I saw three pretty, rustic-looking houses on a hill a couple of miles off, for which I was not sorry, for the evening was very gloomy and a cold east wind was driving down clouds and mists from the hill. Thither I and my tired horse and dogs clambered as best we could, now over masses of boulders, now through deep water-courses, till at last we came to the neighbourhood of the first house, just as night was setting in.

As I approached I was struck by the stillness of the place, and drawing nearer yet I saw that brambles and thorns were mingled with the peaches and pomegranates of the garden, and that the fruit had not been plucked, but eaten away by birds; then I observed that the front door had fallen from its hinges. I rode in and found the place a picture of melancholy desertion. I went on to the next house and found it in the same condition, and the next to that also. I was now pretty well done, but as the prospect of sleeping in the bush or a deserted house was not pleasant I determined to make one more shot for the road. As soon as I had ridden over half a mile it came on to rain 'cats and dogs,' and I got ducked through and through. I turned to make for the houses as best I could through the dark, feeling uncommonly cold, when suddenly I stumbled on a Kaffir coming through the bush. An angel could not have been more welcome.

However there was a drawback. I knew no Kaffir, he knew no English. Luckily I did know the Kaffir name of Mr. Shepstone — 'Sompson' — which is known by every black in South Africa, and managed to make my friend understand that I was travelling with the 'Mighty Hunter,' also that there were four waggons. Now he had not seen these but had heard that they were in the neighbourhood, so following his unerring instinct he at once struck out for the high road from which I had wandered some five miles. Arrived there, he managed by the glimmer of the stars to find the track of the waggons, and having satisfied himself that they had passed, struck away again into the most awful places where anything but the Basuto pony I was riding must have come to grief.

On we went for about eight miles till I began to think my friend was knocking under to the cold (a very little cold kills them) and making for his own kraal. However, to my astonishment he hit the track again and at length came safely to the waggons. I was not sorry to see them. I found the Governor in a dreadful state of alarm.

Two days ago we went up to Pagáté's kraal. He is a rather powerful chief under our protection, having some fifteen thousand people. It is a very good specimen of a chief's kraal. It stands on a high promontory that juts out and divides two

enormous valleys at the bottom of one of which runs the Mooi River. The view is superb ; two thousand feet below lies the plain encircled by tremendous hills bush-clad to the very top, while at the bottom flashes a streak of silver which is the river. There is little of what we admire in views in England, but Nature in her wild and rugged grandeur.

His kraal is curious. In extent it covers about ten acres. First there is the outer fence, inside of which are the huts, and then a stronger inner one to hold the cattle in times of danger. The chief's kraal is at the top and fenced off.

We went into the principal hut and partook of refreshments in the shape of Kaffir beer.

Next morning Pagáté gave a war dance, which is one of the most strange and savage sights I ever saw. It was not very large as they only had a day's notice to collect the warriors ; however some five hundred turned up.

The dance was held in front of our camp. First arrived a warrior herald dressed in his war-plumage, ox-tails round the shoulders and middle, a circlet of some long white hair round the right knee, a circlet round the head from which arose a solitary plume of the Kaffir crane ; in one hand the large white ox-hide shield and in the other his assegais, which however were represented by long sticks, assegais not being allowed at these affairs.

This gentleman was accompanied by a little old woman who rushed about shrieking like a wild thing. He sang the praises of his chief.

'Pagáté ! Pagáté is coming ! Pagáté the son of — who did —, the son of — who did —,' and so on through some scores of generations.

'Pagáté's soldiers are coming ! Pagáté's soldiers who drink the blood of their enemies, who know how to kill ! Pheasants for whom no other pheasant ever scratched' (*i.e.* who could look after themselves), and so on.

Then he retired. Presently the warriors arrived in companies singing a sort of solemn chant. Each man was dressed in his fierce, fantastic war-dress. One half wore heron plumes, the rest long black plumes ; each company had a leader and a separate pattern of shield. They formed themselves into

a half-square looking very fierce and imposing. Each company as it arrived caught up the solemn war-chant, which was sung in perfect time and was the most impressive thing I ever heard.

As the chief came up attended by his bodyguard it grew louder and louder, till it swelled to a regular pæan, when the old man, fired with martial ardour, flung off the attendants who supported him, and forgetting his age and weakness ran to the head of his warriors. I shall never forget the sight.

The Governor drew near and was met with the royal salute accorded only to Cetewayo, Mr. Shepstone and the Governor of Natal—in itself imposing when pronounced by a great number, 'Bayete, Bayete!'

The dance then commenced and was a wonderful performance. Company after company charged past looking for all the world like great fierce birds swooping on their prey. Assegais extended and shields on high, they flitted backwards and forwards, accompanying every movement with a shrill hiss something like the noise which thousands of angry snakes would make, only shriller, a sound impossible to describe but not easy to forget. It would vary:—now it is a troop of lions, now a pack of wild dogs hounding their prey to death.

Then forth leaped warrior after warrior: advanced, challenged, leapt five feet into the air, was down, was up, was between his own legs, was anywhere and everywhere, and was met with this sibilating applause which rose and fell and rose again, but always in perfect time.

By this time they were well excited; even the little boys of the tribe had got shields and joined themselves on at the end, while the beauties, and some of them were not unworthy of the name, took hold of long branches and went undulating about (the only word to describe their motion) urging the warriors on.

Presently forth sprang the heir-apparent, and in a moment the air was filled with this fierce sibilation and every warrior roused into wild activity.

It was a splendidly barbaric sight. The singing was the finest part of it. The last royal salute was also imposing; it is made by striking the assegais on the shield. It commences with a low murmur like that of the sea, growing louder and

louder till it sounds like far-off thunder, and ending with a quick sharp rattle. . . .

In a letter dated July 6, 1876, I say :

. . . I stopped three days in Durban and enjoyed the change very much, as it was the first holiday I have had with the exception of a week when I was sick. . . . There is somewhat stirring news from the Transvaal telling of the first skirmish between the Boers and Secocoeni, a native chief of very considerable power. If the Boers have to deal with him alone they will be all right, though there will very likely be a good deal of bloodshed. But Secocoeni is a tributary of and allied to Cetewayo the Zulu king, who has of late been on the worst of terms with the Boers, so that it is more than probable that he and his thirty thousand armed men supposed to be hovering like a thunder-cloud on the borders of Natal, will take an opportunity to have a shot at them too : if he doesn't he is a greater fool than 'Cetewayo the Silent' is generally supposed to be.

On the other side of them, too, are the Amaswazi, numerically as strong as the Zulus and their nominal tributaries. These have hitherto been friendly with the Boers, not from any natural affection but to protect themselves from the Zulus who are braver and more warlike than they. But that friendly feeling has been shaken and I hear the Amaswazi contingent counted on by the Boers to help them in the Secocoeni business has not arrived. If they patch up their differences with the Zulus and a united attack is made by this threefold power, Lord help the Dutch ! War here between white and black is a terrible thing. No quarter is given and none is asked. But I shall know more about the business to-morrow when the Transvaal mail arrives. . . .

In my next letter, dated 6th October, I talk of articles which I am writing, and add in a solemn postscript : 'Don't say anything to anybody about my having written things in magazines.' Evidently the *cacoethes scribendi* had already taken hold of me. Also I say :



The war in the Transvaal is at a dead stop for the present. The Conference in London seems to be rather a lopsided affair: our delegates and Brand appear to be settling the affairs of South Africa between them. I am delighted to see that they have given Mr. Shepstone the K.C.M.G. It is, I imagine, rarely so well deserved. I got a letter from him the other day; he seems very pleased with England generally.

From the next surviving letter, dated December 2, 1876, I gather that Sir Henry Bulwer at this time was not quite pleased at Sir Theophilus Shepstone's request that I should accompany him on his special mission to the Transvaal. However, ultimately the thing was arranged. I say:

He [*i.e.* Shepstone] wants me to come with him for two reasons. First, we are very good friends and he was kind enough to say he wished to have me as a companion. Second, I imagine there will be a good deal of what is called the champagne and sherry policy up at Pretoria and he wants somebody to look after the entertaining. It will be a most interesting business. . . .

This seems to be the last epistle that can be found of those which I wrote from Natal, so I will return to my manuscript, which now continues as I set it down before their discovery.

At Maritzburg there was a good deal of gaiety and entertaining at Government House, with which, as Sir Henry was unmarried, I had much to do. In connection with one of our dinner-parties I remember an incident which shows that Sir Henry knew how to escape from a dilemma. By some chance there had been invited the Roman Catholic bishop (I think his name was Jolivet), a dean of the Church of England, and a very shining Nonconformist light. Generally it was Sir Henry's custom if a clergyman were present to

ask him to say Grace, but on this occasion, realising the difficulty of the situation, he passed that duty on to me.

‘Haggard,’ he said in a reproachful voice, which suggested that I was neglecting my business, ‘will you be so good as to ask someone to say Grace?’

I worked out the position rapidly in my mind and, coming to the conclusion that one should stick to one’s own people, ignored the Roman Catholic bishop and went for the dean.

Talking of deans reminds me of Bishop Colenso, whom I used to meet. He was a tall, able and agreeable man with a most interesting face, but one who was desperately at loggerheads with everybody. Ecclesiastically his position was that he had in effect been excommunicated by the other South African bishops on account of his views as to the Pentateuch, etc. He had appealed however to the Privy Council, which disallowed the authority of the African bishops, so that he remained the legal bishop of Natal. A schism ensued and the opposition orthodox party appointed a bishop of their own, Macrorie by name.

It always seemed to me somewhat illogical that Colenso should wish to remain in a Church of which he criticised the tenets, on the principle that one should scarcely eat the bread and butter of those whom one attacks. On the other hand the views that Colenso held forty years ago—which, by the way, were suggested to him by the extraordinarily acute questions put by Zulus whom we tried to convert to Christianity—are widespread to-day, even among clergymen. He was in advance of his generation, and like others suffered for it, that is all. If I remember right, one of the great causes of the animosity of the South African Episcopal Church against him was that he was said to look leniently upon the native practice of polygamy.

But here again there is much to be said on Colenso's side. Many people find it difficult to understand why it is more essentially immoral to marry several wives than to marry one, provided that they *are* married and, except for good reason of divorce, supported to their lives' end. Particularly can this be argued where natives are concerned whose very intricate laws of property and succession are closely interwoven with this custom of polygamy, to which the women are, or were, as devotedly attached as the men.

A Zulu woman does not as a rule wish to be obliged to bear all a man's children or to do all the work of his household. She likes to be one of a band of sisters (for, having each of them her separate little establishment, they seldom if ever quarrel) and to share in the dignity of being one of a numerous family. Moreover their habit is, from the time that they find themselves with prospects of motherhood, to live apart from the husband until the child is weaned, say for two years, which law results in the production of a race that is physically splendid. Further, polygamy absorbs all the women ; practically none are left without husbands or fall into the immoral courses which are the scandal of civilised nations. Such a thing as a 'girl of the streets' is scarcely known among the raw Zulus. If it were explained to these, for instance, that in this country alone we have nearly two million women who cannot possibly marry because there is no man to marry them, or fulfil their natural function of child-bearing without being called vile names, they would on their part think that state of affairs extremely wrong. I remember a story of a well-educated Zulu who was told that the Christian law laid down that he must have but one wife. He replied that he would like to study that law for himself, and, taking away a Bible,

spent some months in reading it from end to end. At last he returned to the missionary and said that he could find no such law therein; that, on the contrary, most of the great men in the Book appeared to have had many wives. Oham, the brother of Cetewayo the Zulu king, made a somewhat similar reply. He was a very powerful chief who desired to become a Christian, and would naturally have brought many other converts with him.

‘But,’ said he, ‘these women whom you wish me to put away have been the companions of my life, and I refuse to cast them on the world in their age.’

So Oham remained a pagan; at least, that was the story I heard.

Another aspect of the case is that because of its attitude towards polygamy, as to the rights and wrongs of which I express no opinion who do but set out the other side of the argument, Christianity can scarcely hope to compete with Islam where the bulk of the natives of Africa are concerned. Islam preaches a god and says, ‘You may keep your wives, but you must give up spirituous liquor.’ Christianity also preaches a god but says, ‘You must put away all wives save one, but spirituous liquor is not forbidden.’

Among primitive peoples who are asked to abandon practices which their forefathers have followed for thousands of years, one can guess which line of reasoning is likely to be accepted, especially if they have come to the conclusion that intoxicating drink proves more injurious to the individual and the race than a plurality of wives.

Once of late years I made a speech at a big African missionary congress in London, in which I ventured to put forward these aspects of the case, or something like them. There were, I think, five bishops on the

platform, and I was rather astonished to find that out of the five two seemed to think them not devoid of sense. The other three, however, differed strongly.

Colenso, I should add, was unpopular among many colonists, not on account of religious matters, but because he was so strong and, as they considered, so intemperate an advocate of the rights of natives. I confess that here again I find myself more or less in sympathy with him. White settlers, especially if they be not of the highest order, are too apt to hate, despise, and revile the aboriginal inhabitants among whom they find themselves. Often this is because they fear them, or even more frequently because the coloured people, not needing to do so, will not work for them at a low rate of wage. For example, they cannot understand why these blacks should object to spend weeks and months hundreds of feet underground, employed in the digging of ore, and, in their hearts, often enough would like to compel them by force to do their will. Yet surely the Kaffir whose land we have taken has a right to follow his own opinions and convenience on this subject.

Also many white men have, or used to have, a habit of personally assaulting natives, frequently upon quite insufficient grounds. They say or said that these would do nothing unless they were beaten. I do not believe it. Where Zulus are concerned at least, a great deal depends upon the person in authority over them. No race is quicker at discovering any alloy of base metal in a man's nature. Many who are called 'gentlemen' among us on account of their wealth or station, will not pass as such with them. By a kind of instinct they know the true article when they see it, whatever may be the position in life held by the individual in question. True gentility, as I have seen again and

again, is not the prerogative of a class but a gift innate in certain members of all classes, and by no means a common gift. With it rank, station, wealth have nothing to do ; it either is or is not born in a man, and still more so in a woman. To the Zulu the rest are what he calls *unfagozana*, that is, low fellows. These, by misfortune, are almost always in the majority. Like others, savages have their gentlefolk and their common people, but with all their faults even those common people are not vulgar in our sense of the word. In essential matters they still preserve a certain dignity. Of course, however, I talk of those savages whom I know. There may be others among whom things are different. Also, in this respect as in others, matters in Africa may have changed since my day. I talk of a bygone generation.

One last word about Colenso. His native name of 'Usobantu' shows the estimate that the Kaffirs formed of him. It means 'Father of the People.'

Among other remarkable Natalians of that day were the old Chief Justice (was not his name O'Connor ?) and Mr. John Bird, the Treasurer of the Colony and the compiler of a valuable work called 'The Annals of Natal' which in after years I had the pleasure of reviewing in the *Saturday Review*. The Chief Justice has always remained in my mind because of his curious power of self-control. I remember that when the mail came in, which at that time I believe was only once a month, he used to undo the many *Times* newspapers that it brought to him and arrange them in a pile. Then, beginning with the oldest in date, on each day he would read his *Times*, nor, however exciting might be the news, would he suffer himself to anticipate its daily development. He never looked at the end of the story. Thus did he delude himself into the belief

that he was still in England and receiving his morning paper wet from the press. The drawback to the system was that he was always a month behind the Natal world and two behind that of Europe.

Mr. John Bird, a dear old gentleman, had the most marvellous memory of any man I have ever known. He told me that if he read once anything he liked he remembered it ; if he read it twice he remembered it without error ; if he read it thrice he never forgot it. In his youth he had been a surveyor, and in the course of his long waggon journeys in the Cape he taught himself Greek. I have heard him offer to bet anyone five pounds that he would repeat any book in Homer that might be selected without making five mistakes. Also I heard him give a lecture on 'The Pleasures of Memory' which was nearly two hours long. In the course of this lecture he made dozens of quotations from all sorts of authors and never used a single note.

The only instance that I can recollect of parallel powers was that of a gentleman who could repeat all my romance, 'She,' without a mistake. I believe he was a South African, and I imagine he must have been a relative of Mr. Bird.

But the most interesting man of all with whom I came in contact in Natal was one who afterwards became my beloved chief and friend, for, notwithstanding the wide difference of our years, that relationship existed between us. I refer to Sir Theophilus Shepstone, or 'Sompseu' as he was called by the natives throughout South Africa.

Sir Theophilus was born in England in 1817, and emigrated to the Cape with his father, a clergyman, when he was but three years old. In his early youth he learned many Kaffir dialects at the mission stations. After filling various appointments he became Secretary

for Native Affairs in Natal in 1856, a position which he held for twenty years. His policy was to maintain the tribal system of the natives under the supremacy of the British Crown, and to civilise them by degrees. Often he has told me that he believed that the Zulus should be taught to work and that their minds should be opened before attempts were made to Christianise them. I should add that his policy, although much criticised, was singularly successful. This is proved by the fact that, notwithstanding the enormous number of savages who had poured from Zululand into Natal, with the single exception of the petty rising of the chief Langelibalele ('the Bright Shining Sun'), which happened a year or two before I went to the Colony, there was no rebellion or native war during all the time of his management of affairs. Personally he was known and almost worshipped by every Kaffir in the land.

'I love that boy,' I once heard him say to one of my elder colleagues as I passed by him, he thought out of earshot, and I have never forgotten the words or the tone in which they were uttered. Well, the affection was reciprocated, and will be while I have memory.

He was a curious, silent man, who had acquired many of the characteristics of the natives amongst whom he lived. Often it was impossible to guess from his somewhat impassive face what was passing in his brain. He had the power of silence, but he observed everything and forgot little. To me, however, when the mood was on him, he would talk a great deal—the stories I have heard from him would fill half a volume—and sometimes even unfold to me the secret springs of his actions. I only once remember his being angry with me, for he was very tender to my faults,



and that was, I think, just before the issue of the Proclamation annexing the Transvaal. I had ventured to suggest to him that it would be wiser to leave the country unannexed and retire to Natal.

‘Then,’ I said, ‘the Zulus and the Boers will destroy each other, and the Transvaal will fall like a ripe apple into the lap of Great Britain.’

He asked me angrily if I understood what I was saying, and that such a policy would mean the destruction of thousands of white men, women and children by the Zulu assegais, to be followed probably by a great war between white and black.

I collapsed, but often and often since that day have I reflected that my advice, tainted though it may have been with the callousness of youth, was absolutely sound. For what happened? First we had to fight the Zulus and slaughter them by thousands, paying no small toll ourselves, and then we had to fight the Boers, not once, but twice. If we had allowed them to exhaust themselves upon each other the total loss of life would have been no greater, if so great, and the settlement of South Africa would have been effected without the shedding of British blood; moreover, in the end the Boers would have implored our assistance and gladly have accepted our rule. But I anticipate; of these matters I must speak later.

With the Zulus themselves, as distinguished from the Natal Kaffirs, Shepstone had much to do. Thus in 1861, while King Panda still reigned, and after the great civil war between Cetewayo and his brother Umbelazi, in which the latter was killed or died at the battle of the Tugela, he was sent by the Government to proclaim Cetewayo heir to the throne. For some unknown reason, Cetewayo did not wish to be thus recognised by the white men. Indeed a preliminary

difficulty arose. The Zulu lawyers and headmen declared that it was impossible that their future king should be nominated by Sompseu. It was overcome in the following extraordinary fashion. At a great meeting of the indunas or councillors and chiefs it was announced that Sompseu was a Zulu king, that he stood in the place of Chaka, the African Napoleon and Panda's uncle, and that the spirit of Chaka had entered into him—not a very comfortable possession for a highly respectable English gentleman. From that day forward, quite independent of his authority as a representative of the Queen, Shepstone had personal sovereign rights in Zululand. Thus he could have ordered anyone to be killed or have declared war or peace. It was, I firmly believe, because of this personal authority that he was able to prevent the Zulus from attacking the Boers in 1877, as I shall show that he did. L-

But of all these and many other events I have told in my book, 'Cetewayo and his White Neighbours,' which was first published in 1882, and to that book I must refer the reader who is interested in them. In these pages I do not propose to write a history of South Africa during the eventful years in which I knew it, but rather to treat of my personal experiences at the time, which perhaps may throw some new light upon parts of that history.

The remainder of my life in Natal, that is as a secretary to the Governor—for I returned to that country afterwards in another capacity—can be summed up in few words. I copied despatches, received guests, and did my other duties, probably not as well as I might have done. But in connection with these I cannot think of much that is worth setting down.

Perhaps I may add a curious little story. Captain

Cox, my colleague on Sir Henry Bulwer's staff, who was an officer in one of the regiments in Natal—I think he belonged to the ill-fated 24th—received a blow while playing polo which severed what I believe is called the external carotid artery, a vessel which runs up by the side of the temple. A serious operation was performed on him by the doctors which necessitated his being kept under chloroform for five hours, but great difficulty was experienced in tying this artery. He seemed to get better, and at last was allowed to eat a snipe which I went out and shot for him. That evening some circumstance or other made me uneasy about him, and of my own motion I passed the night sitting up in the office, going in to look at him from time to time. He slept well, and when the dawn came I thought that I would retire to bed. By an afterthought I returned to give him another look, and found him still lying asleep, but with the blood spurting from his head in a little fountain. I pressed my thumb on the artery and held it there until assistance came. Another operation was performed, and ultimately he recovered, though one of his eyes was affected.

Captain Cox was subsequently wounded at Ulundi, and in the end died, I think, in India when he was Colonel of his regiment.

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Photo: H. F. Gros.

SIR THEOPHILUS SHEPSTONE AND HIS STAFF

Flag that annexed the Transvaal.

*Back row*—Lt. Phillips. Melmoth Osborn. Col. Brooke, R.E.

*Front row*—Morcon. Henderson. Sir T. Shepstone. Dr. Lyle. Fynney. Capt James.

Rider Haggard.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SPECIAL COMMISSION TO THE TRANSVAAL

Shepstone appointed Special Commissioner to Transvaal—Wide powers—H. R. H. on Shepstone's staff—Umslopogaas attached to Commission—To Pretoria by ox-waggon—Thirty-five days—Melmoth Osborn and Major Marshal Clarke on Commission—First acquaintance with Boers—'Opsitting'—President Burgers—Danger to Transvaal from Cetewayo's Zulus and Secocoeni's tribe—Arrive Pretoria—H. R. H. accompanies Osborn and Clarke on Mission to Secocoeni—Rough journey—Indaba at his kraal—Plot to murder English Mission—Frustrated by an accident—Safe return to Pretoria.

At the end of 1876 Sir Theophilus Shepstone was appointed Special Commissioner to the Transvaal. His commission was a wide one, for, although this was not known at the time, it gave him powers, if he thought fit, to annex the country, 'in order to secure the peace and safety of our said colonies and our subjects elsewhere.' When the vastness of the territories and the questions concerned are considered, this was a great authority to leave to the discretion of a single man. But thus was the British Empire made before the days of cables, when everything depended upon the judgment of the officers on the spot.

On his way out to Natal from England he was shipwrecked on the coast not very far from Cape Town, an event that some might have thought a bad omen. I asked him what he thought of while as yet they did not know whether they would escape.

'I thought that I should like to die decent,' he

answered, 'and spent the time in hunting for my trousers.'

Exactly how I came to accompany Sir Theophilus on his important and history-making Mission I cannot now recall. At any rate I went as a member of his staff. Here is a list of us :

Mr. Osborn, afterwards Sir Melmoth Osborn.

Major Clarke, afterwards Sir Marshal Clarke.

Colonel Brooke, R.E.

Captain James.

Mr. Henderson.

Mr. Morcom, afterwards the Attorney-General of Natal.

Mr. Fynney.

Myself.

Doctor Lyle, medical officer to the Mission, and

Lieutenant Phillips, in charge of the escort of twenty-five Natal Mounted Police.

Of these I believe that with myself Colonel Brooke still survives (1911), although he must be an old man now. Phillips also was alive when last I heard of him. He rose to command the Natal Mounted Police, and had then retired. The rest are all dead, Clarke being the last to go, and I may say that I am the only member of the Commission left living who was closely concerned with the political side of its work.

There was another individual attached to the Commission of whom I must give some account. He was Umslopogaas, or more correctly M'hlopekazi, who acted as a kind of head native attendant to Sir Theophilus. Umslopogaas, then a man of about sixty, was a Swazi of high birth.<sup>1</sup> He was a tall, thin,

<sup>1</sup> The *Natal Witness* of October 26, 1897, when reporting his death, says that he was son of 'Mswazi, King of Swaziland, and in his youth belonged to the Nyati Regiment, the crack corps of the country.—Ed.

fierce-faced fellow with a great hole above the left temple over which the skin pulsed, that he had come by in some battle. He said that he had killed ten men in single combat, of whom the first was a chief called Shive, always making use of a battle-axe. However this may be, he was an interesting old fellow from whom I heard many stories that Fynney used to interpret.

As the reader may be aware, I have availed myself of his personality to a considerable extent in various Zulu romances, and especially in 'Allan Quatermain.' Here are two stories concerning him.

One day, long after I had left Africa, he had a talk with Osborn, whom the natives called 'Mali-mat.'

'Is it true, Mali-mat,' asked Umslopogaas, 'that Indanda' (*i.e.* myself) 'has been using my name largely in books that he has written?'

'Yes, it is true, Umslopogaas.'

'So! Now what does Indanda do with the books when he has written them?'

'He sells them, Umslopogaas.'

'Then, Mali-mat, say to the Inkoos Indanda when you meet him across the Black Water that, as he makes money by writing about me, it is right and just that he should send me half the money!'

I took the hint and sent him, not money, but a very fine hunting-knife with his name engraved upon it.

The other story is that not long before his death, which took place in 1897, Lady Hely-Hutchinson, the wife of the Governor of Natal, asked him whether he was not proud that his name should appear in books which the white men read all over the world.

'No, Inkoosikazi (Chieftainess),' he answered, 'to me it is nothing. Yet I am glad that Indanda has set my name in writings that will not be forgotten, so that,



when my people are no more a people, one of them at least may be remembered.'

I have a photograph of Umslopogaas which was taken the day before his death. The face might have served some Greek sculptor for the model of that of a dying god.

I think that we trekked from Maritzburg on December 20, 1876, and took thirty-five days to traverse the four hundred odd miles between it and Pretoria in our ox-waggon. It was my first real introduction to African travel, and I greatly enjoyed the journey, hot as it was at that time of year.

Well do I remember our leisurely progress over the plains, the mountains, and the vast, rolling high veld of the Transvaal territory. Still I can see the fearful sweeping thunderstorms that overtook us, to be followed by moonlit nights of surpassing brilliancy which we watched from beside the fires of our camp. Those camps were very pleasant, and in them, as we smoked and drank our 'square-face' after the day's trek, I heard many a story of savage Africa from Sir Theophilus himself, from Osborn and from Fynney, who next to him, perhaps, knew as much of the Zulus and their history as any living in Natal.

For instance, Osborn actually saw the battle of the Tugela, which took place between the rival princes Cetewayo and Umbelazi in 1856. With the temerity of a young man he swam his horse across the river and hid himself in a wooded kopje in the middle of the battlefield. He saw Umbelazi's host driven back and the veteran regiment, nearly three thousand strong, that Panda had sent to aid his favourite son, move up to its support. He described to me the frightful fray that followed. Cetewayo sent out a regiment against it. They met, and he said that the roll of the shields

as they came together was like to that of deepest thunder. Then the Greys passed over Cetewayo's regiment as a wave passes over a sunken ridge of rock, and left it dead. Another regiment came against them and the scene repeated itself, only more slowly, for many of the veterans were down. Now the six hundred of them who remained formed themselves in a ring upon a hillock and fought on till they were buried beneath the heaps of the slain.

I have described this battle, in which and the subsequent rout tens of thousands of people perished, in a romance as yet unpublished<sup>1</sup> that I have written under the title of 'Child of Storm.' It is wonderful that Osborn should have escaped with his life. This he did by hiding close and tying his coat over his horse's head to prevent it from neighing. When darkness fell he rode back to the Tugela and swam its corpse-crowded waters. Sir Theophilus visited its banks a day or two afterwards, and told me that he never saw another sight so fearful as they presented, because of the multitude of dead men, women and children with which they were strewn.

There were never any quarrels among us of Shepstone's staff during that long journey or afterwards. Indeed we were a band of brothers—as brothers ought to be. Personally I formed friendships then, especially with Osborn and Clarke, that endured till their deaths and I trust may be renewed elsewhere.

When we crossed into the Transvaal our expedition assumed a more business aspect. Greater ceremony was observed and a guard was mounted at night, for we did not quite know how we should be received. Now I made my first real acquaintance with the Boers, who came from all quarters to visit or to spy upon us.

<sup>1</sup> Published in 1913.—Edn.

They were rough folk : big, bearded men with all the old Dutch characteristics, who made a greater show of religion than they practised, especially when Kaffirs were concerned. I did not like them much at the time—few Englishmen did—but I can see now that I ought to have made more allowances. The circumstances of their history and up-bringing account for that which was repellent both in their actions and their character. Into that history I will not enter further than to say that they had been bred in an atmosphere of hereditary hate of England and its Governments, which in some particulars, such as that of the manner of the freeing of the slaves in the Cape Colony in 1836, was not altogether unjustified. Moreover they had fought fearful battles with the natives in the territories they occupied, and learned to loathe them. The Old Testament too was the standard by which they ruled their conduct. They compared themselves to the Hebrews marching from their land of bondage in Egypt, while the Kaffirs in the parallel filled the places of the Canaanites and Jebusites and other tribes that were unfortunate enough to stand in their way. So they slew them mercilessly, and under the name of apprenticeship practically enslaved many of them. But in those days I saw only the results, and judged by those results. I did not see nor had I learned the causes which produced them. Now I know that there is much to admire in the Boer character, also that among them were many men of real worth. Indeed, as I shall tell, one of these afterwards saved my life and those of my two companions.

On our way up to Pretoria we entertained our Dutch visitors on several occasions as well as the circumstances would allow. These were uncouth dinner-parties, but very amusing. At one of them I remember

a jovial old boy who sat next to me invited me to come and 'opsit' with his daughter, whom he described as a 'mooi mesje,' that is, a pretty girl. I accepted the invitation, packed the old Boer off home, and went to Osborn to inquire exactly what 'opsitting' might be.

When I discovered that it consisted in sitting alone with a young woman at night with a candle burning between the two, which somewhat dreary proceeding *ipso facto* involved a promise of marriage, I did not follow the matter further. I should explain, however, that the engagement depended upon the length of the candle. If the young lady wished to encourage the 'opsitter' she produced a long one that would last till dawn, and his fate was sealed. If she desired to be rid of him the candle was of the shortest, and when it was burnt out he was bound to go. Conversation, if allowed, was unnecessary; all you had to do was to sit on either side of the candle, which might not be passed.

I wonder if they still 'opsit' in South Africa, or if the twentieth century has made an end of this quaint and doubtless ancient custom.

In Pretoria, where everyone, whatever his nationality, was utterly sick of the Boer régime, the Mission was received with the greatest enthusiasm. There were reception committees, there were dinners, there were balls, for although the community was practically bankrupt this did not detract from its gaiety or the lavishness of its hospitality. How the bills were paid I am sure I do not know, but I presume it must have been in kind, for no one had any money. The position of the Republic was desperate, and of it all despaired. Taxes could no longer be collected, and it was said that the postmasters were directed to pay themselves their own salaries—in stamps. The forces of the country,

Sir Marshal says :

My attention was called some days ago to the article you wrote to *South Africa* on the 27th ultimo. I have not read Leyds's book. Brooke [our colleague on Shepstone's staff.—H. R. H.] told me that he began it but found it so full of misstatements, which, considering what I know of the author, was natural, he did not care to go on with it. I am glad that you did read it and were able to expose the falsehood of the charges levelled at Sir Theophilus. There are few of our party left now and not one with the complete knowledge you have of what took place in Pretoria at the time of the Annexation. I can of course fully endorse the story you tell of what took place when the joint commission went to Secocoeni, but only on one occasion, so far as my memory serves me, did I hear Sir Theophilus express in unguarded language to a Boer . . . [word illegible] his views as to the imminence of the danger that menaced the people of the Transvaal from the Zulus. I think it was Lyle [Dr. Lyle, the medical officer to the Mission.—H. R. H.], who was with me, thought that what he said might be distorted to his detriment, but on expressing this opinion to Sir Theophilus he said he did not care, as he knew the reality of the danger he had indicated and felt that the responsibility laid on him must override any personal consideration. Looking back through all that has since occurred one feels all the more strongly the courage and sense of duty that actuated our Chief. Even had the Boers finally beat back the Zulu onslaught what a loss of life and untold misery must have at first resulted, and no one but Shepstone could have stopped Cetewayo and that only by the act of Annexation. . . .

I consider that this letter, emanating from so distinguished a public servant as Sir Marshal Clarke, one of the most noble-minded and upright men that I ever knew, is evidence of great value as to the motives which actuated Sir Theophilus at this period. Moreover it entirely confirms what I have written above.

While the negotiations were going on between Shepstone and the Boers it was suddenly announced

in the Volksraad 'that peace had been provisionally concluded with Secocoeni's envoys, according to which Secocoeni and his people became subjects of the State, and that the chief himself had ratified this among other stipulations.'<sup>1</sup>

This news of course was very important, since, if the Transvaal Government had really induced Secocoeni to become its subject, one of the causes of the proposed British intervention ceased to exist. Presently, however, there arrived a letter from the Rev. A. Merensky, a German missionary at Botsabelo at whose instance negotiations for peace had been begun, which threw the gravest doubt upon the genuineness of this alleged treaty. The result was that a Commission was appointed by President Burgers to investigate the matter, with which were sent two members of Shepstone's staff to whom I acted as secretary. The Commissioners were Mr. Holtzhausen, a Boer, and Mr. Van Gorkom, a Hollander, who held some office in the Transvaal Government. The representatives of H.M.'s Special Commissioner were Mr. Osborn and Captain Clarke.

The journey to Secocoeni's country was long and rough, dangerous also, as at this season of the year (March) the fever was very bad in that low veld, so bad indeed that even the natives were dying. At a place called Fort Weber was established a force of irregular troops in the service of the Transvaal Government. They were in a wretched condition, having for some while received their pay in valueless promissory notes that were known as 'Good-fors,' or, at full length, as 'Good-for-nothings.' Also out of their ninety horses eighty-two were dead of sickness, so that they could scarcely be called an effective body of irregular cavalry. Still ammunition remained to them,

<sup>1</sup> Sir T. Shepstone to the Earl of Carnarvon, No. 111, C-1776.

for they received us with much firing of guns and of their two small field-pieces ; also with an address.

And now I will tell a story which shows how valuable a love of scenery may be under certain circumstances. Among the officers at Fort Weber was one whom I will call Mr. A., who was largely responsible for the alleged treaty with Secocoeni. Also there was a Boer called Deventer, an excellent man who could sit a bucking horse better than anyone I ever knew. Subsequently he entered the service of the British Government and was killed, how, I forget.

Shortly after the Annexation Deventer told the following tale to Osborn, and at the time we satisfied ourselves that this tale was true. A night or two before our arrival at Fort Weber, when it was known that we were coming, Makurupiji, Secocoeni's 'Tongue' or prime minister, visited the place in connection with the peace negotiations. Whether he was still there when we arrived I am not quite certain. During his stay Mr. A.—who, I should add, was not of pure Boer blood—in Deventer's hearing assured Makurupiji that if the Boers had scourged Secocoeni with whips, the English would scourge him with scorpions. He said that they would take all the women and cattle and make slaves or soldiers of the men. So earnest were his protestations that at length Makurupiji, who knew nothing about the English, was persuaded to believe him and asked what could be done to prevent these calamities.

Mr. A. answered that there was but one way out of the danger, namely to kill the British envoys. To this plan Makurupiji at length consented, and it was arranged that on our way back from Secocoeni's town we three were to be ambushed and murdered by the Basutos. I should add that we never learned whether

or no Secocoeni himself had any part in this scheme, or whether all the credit of it must be given to Makurupiji, a very cunning and villainous-looking person, who, I believe, ultimately committed suicide after the destruction of the tribe, preferring death to imprisonment. If Secocoeni was concerned in it retribution overtook him when, a year or two later, Sir Garnet Wolseley stormed his town with the help of the Swazis and wiped out his people. I think that he himself died in jail in Pretoria.

After the plot had been settled in all its details Mr. A. and Makurupiji separated. During the night, however, Deventer, who was horrified at the whole business, crept to where Makurupiji was sleeping, woke him up and implored him to have nothing to do with so foul a crime. Makurupiji listened to his arguments and in the end answered, 'My words are my words. What I have said I have said.'

We arrived and, according to my original pencilled notes which I have before me, started for Secocoeni's on March 27th. All that day we rode through wild and most beautiful country, now across valleys and now over mountains. Indeed I never saw any more lovely in its own savage way, backed as it was by the splendid Blueberg range rising like a titanic wall, its jagged pinnacles aglow with the fires of the setting sun. At length, scrambling down the path, in which one of our horses was seized with the dreaded sickness and left to die, we entered the fever-trap known as Secocoeni's Town and rode on past the celebrated fortified kopje to the beautiful hut that had been prepared for us.

Here we were received by Swasi, Secocoeni's uncle and guest-master. All the population flocked out to look at us, clad in the sweet simplicity of a little strip of skin tied round the middle. Even here, however,



the female love of ornament was in evidence, for the hair of the women was elaborately arranged and powdered with some metal that caused it to glitter and gave it a blue tinge. Our hut was very superior to that built by the Zulus. It stood in a reed-hedged courtyard which was floored with limestone concrete. Also it had a verandah round it. The interior walls were painted with red ochre in lines and spirals something after the old Greek fashion. Indeed, these Basutos gave me the idea that they were sprung from some race with a considerable knowledge of civilisation and its arts. In other ways, however, they had quite relapsed into barbarism. Thus, as we entered the town about a hundred women returned from labouring in the fields, stripped themselves stark naked before us, and proceeded to wash in a stream—though I observe in my notes that they did this ‘in a modest kind of way.’ I should add that at this time very few white men had ever passed the gates of Secocoeni’s Town.

It was an uncanny kind of place. If you got up at night, if you moved anywhere, you became aware that dozens or hundreds of eyes were watching you. Privacy was impossible. You ate, too, in public. The chief sent down a sheep. You saw it living, next you saw it more or less cooked and held before you in quarters on sticks by kneeling natives. You cut off chunks with your knife, ate what you liked or, rather, what you must, and threw the rest to other natives who stood round staring, among them the heir-apparent to the chieftainship. These caught the pieces as a dog does, and gobbled them down like a dog.

On the morning following our arrival, after a night so hot that sleep was almost impossible—for at that season the place, surrounded as it was by hills, was like

a stewpan—we rose and, quite unwashed, since water was unobtainable, ate more chunks of half-cooked sheep, which we flavoured with quinine. Then after combating demands for brandy, whereof the fame had spread even to this remote place, we surrendered ourselves into the charge of the astute-faced Makurupiji, the fat Swasi, and of the general of the forces, an obese person called Galock, with a countenance resembling that of a pig. These eminent officers conducted us for nearly a mile, through a heat so burning that we grew quite exhausted, to the place of the *indaba*, or talk. Here, under a rough shed open on all sides, sat about a hundred of the headmen who had come ‘to witness.’ Beyond this was the chief’s private enclosure, where he was seated on the hide of a bull under a shady tree, clothed in a tiger-skin kaross and a cotton blanket, and wearing on his head a huge old felt hat. He rose and shook hands with us through the gateway. He was a man of middle age with twinkling black eyes and a flat nose, very repulsive to look on. After this he retired to his bull-hide, where he sat chewing handfuls of some intoxicating green leaf, and took no further active part in the proceedings. All the conversation was carried on through Makurupiji, his ‘Tongue,’ who personated him, using the pronoun ‘I,’ and talking of ‘my father, Sequati,’ and so forth.

It was very curious to see one man pretending thus to be another, while that other sat within a few yards of him apparently unconcerned. Another strange sight was to watch the arrival of the various notables. As each headman appeared he paused in front of the gateway beyond which sat Secocoeni chewing his leaves, clapped his hands softly together and uttered a word of unknown meaning which sounded like ‘Maréma.’ Then he took his seat with the others.

In the midst of this throng we squatted for four long hours. I remember that I was perched upon a log in the blaze of the sun, taking notes to the best of my ability—those which are before me now—as the interpreters rendered the conversation from Sesutu into Dutch and English. It was a very trying experience, since I had to keep my every faculty on the strain lest I should miss something of importance in this medley of tongues. On comparing the report we finally sent in signed by Osborn, Clarke, and myself (C-1776, Enclosure 6 in No. 111)—which report I remember I wrote—with my original pencil notes, I observe, however, that not much escaped me.

Into the details of that document I will not enter here, as it is a matter of history, further than to say that the alleged treaty under which Secocoeni was supposed to have bound himself to become a subject of the Transvaal proved to be a fraud. When this had been satisfactorily demonstrated beyond the possibility of denial, the officer whom I have named Mr. A., who had negotiated the said treaty, rose in a rage, real or simulated, and withdrew, taking with him the Dutch Commissioners, Messrs. Holtzhausen and Van Gorkom. After this we entered the private enclosure and had an interview with Secocoeni himself. At first the chief desired that Makurupiji should continue to speak for him, but to this we refused to agree.

I need not repeat the substance of the interview, since it is published as an enclosure to the despatch which I have quoted above. A re-reading of it, however, makes me wonder whether Secocoeni himself was actually privy to the plot to murder us, or whether it was entirely Makurupiji's work. If he was, he must have been a really remarkable old scoundrel. I am

bound to add, however, that, as his subsequent history shows, he was in fact a quite unprincipled person whom no promises or considerations of honour could bind. So it is very possible that he *did* know all about the plot.

At length we bade farewell to the chief, whom we left still chewing leaves like Nebuchadnezzar, and that was the last I ever saw of him. On arriving at our hut we found that the Commission had departed, leaving us without any guide. We sent back to Secocoeni asking for guides, and then began a series of mysterious delays. We were told that all the men were out at work, although scores stood about us; that they did not know the road, and so forth. At last Osborn addressed old Swasi and others in a way they could not misunderstand, with the result that two lads were produced.

These lads were named Sekouili and Nojoiani, or some such words, appellations which we corrupted into 'Scowl' and 'No-joke.' Under their guidance we started. I may add here that when we had crossed the mountains, for some reason which we could not at the time understand, these Basuto boys expressed themselves as afraid to return to Secocoeni's country, saying that if they did so they would be killed. One or both of them remained in my service for a long time afterwards, as they implored to be taken on with us.

By the time we had reached the crest of the first range the sun had set and the moon was up. Here the path forked, one division of it, that by which we had come, running on over the mountains, the other following the line of a deep valley at a lower level. A discussion arose between us as to which we should take; my elders were in favour of the upper, preferring those ills we knew of, which the two boys, Scowl and

No-joke, begged and prayed us not to leave, almost with passion. I have little doubt that this was because the ambush into which they were directed to lead us was set upon that upper path. I, however, pleaded for the lower path, just because the fancy had taken me that thence the view of the moonlit valley would be very grand, and stuck to my point. At length one of my companions, I think it was Osborn, said with a laugh, 'Oh! let the young donkey have his way. Who knows, perhaps he is right!' or words to that effect.

Evidently my anticipations as to the view from this lower path were not disappointed, for in my notes written up on the next day I find the following :

'It was sombre, weird, grand. Every valley became a mysterious deep, and every hill and stone and tree shone with that cold, pale lustre that the moon alone can throw. Silence reigned, the silence of the dead.'

Had we gone by the upper path I believe it would soon have been the silence of the dead for us. But if so my fancies, or some merciful influence that caused and directed them, proved our salvation.

After we had ridden a long way through the silence that I have described and were getting out of the mountains into the valley, we became aware of a great commotion going on amongst the rocks a mile or so to our left, where ran the road we should have followed. War-horns were blown, and a Basuto warrior armed with gun and spear rushed down to look at us, then vanished. Probably a match struck to light a pipe had shown him our whereabouts, or he may have heard our voices. So we crossed the mountains in safety. And now I will take up Deventer's story.

He said that it was the accident of our choosing the lower path that in fact saved our lives, as on the upper one the murderers were waiting. When we

emerged from it the Boer Commission and Mr. A. had, he added, crossed the great valley and reached the further range of hills, where they were met by some troopers from the fort. Here, by the blowing of the horns that we had heard, or otherwise—for these natives have very strange and effective means of communication—knowledge came to Mr. A. that in some unexpected fashion we had escaped the ambush and were riding towards him across the valley. Thereon, said Deventer, he lost all control of himself and called for volunteers to shoot us down in the second nek. Then, according to him, Holtzhausen—who, by the way, was one of the best fellows I ever knew, a very honest and straightforward man, and who, like Mr. Van Gorkom, had no suspicion of any of these things—intervened with great effect, shouting out that if this wicked deed were done he ‘would publish it in every Court of Europe.’

After this declaration no volunteers came forward : indeed they might have refused to do so in any case ; with the result that about dawn on the following day we arrived utterly worn out at Fort Weber—I remember that several times I fell asleep on my horse—where we were received quite affectionately by Mr. A.

When Deventer revealed all this appalling story some months after, he asked and received a promise that no public use should be made of the information, since when it came to his knowledge he was in the service of the Boer Government, and therefore did not consider himself justified in disclosing secrets to the prejudice of another servant of that Government. This wish of his was strictly respected, but, as may be imagined, the English authorities after the Annexation, although they could make no use of their knowledge, were not willing to accede to Mr. A.’s applications for

employment under the new régime. A while later he came to the house at Pretoria in which I was then living with Osborn, who was the Secretary to Government, which house, I think, was called 'The Oaks.' Mr. Osborn received him, and I, who was writing in an adjoining room separated from them only by some very thin partition, heard words running high between them. He (A.) was blustering and demanding to be employed as a right. In the end he asked why he should be left out when so many other Boer officials had received appointments. Thereon Osborn answered with great rigour, 'Damn it! Mr. A.—you know why.'

The man attempted no answer, and a moment later I saw him walk out of the house with a very crestfallen air, after which I think Osborn came into my room and expressed his feelings on the whole subject with the utmost freedom.

That is the story, of which the reader, if there ever should be such a person, can form his own opinion. Of course it rests upon Deventer's word supported only by certain corroborative evidence of a circumstantial sort, such as the sudden departure of the Boer Commission, leaving us alone in Secocoeni's Town without guides, the behaviour of the two Basuto lads, and of the individual inculpatated on the occasion that I have just mentioned. Deventer *may* have lied, but I see no reason why he should have done so, and it was not in keeping with his character, nor did any of us at the time find cause to doubt the truth of his statement. On the other hand our disappearance from this mortal sphere might have been convenient to Mr. A., who knew that when we saw Secocoeni we should discover that the alleged treaty with that chief which he had negotiated had been forged as regards its most important

\* clause. If we were all dead we could not communicate our knowledge to the Special Commissioner, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, and through him to the British Government, in which event his credit would have been saved and the South African Republic, which he served, would have been freed from a great embarrassment. It is not probable that any more will ever be known of this matter, which, so to speak, now rests between Mr. A.—whose name I refrain from mentioning—and God. Of the Englishmen concerned I alone survive, and if any of the others still live they must be very old men.

At Fort Weber I think we separated from the Boer Commission, also that Clarke left us to attend to business elsewhere. Osborn and I trekked day and night in an ox-waggon to Middelburg—trekked till the oxen fell down in the yokes. It was a fearful and a sleepless journey. At some period in it we were left quite without food. Only a single pot of jam remained. We opened the tin and helped ourselves to the jam with our knives, sitting one on either side of it in the vasty veld, till we could eat no more of the sickly stuff, hungry though we were.

While we were thus engaged an eagle sailed over us with a koran or small bustard in its claws. I shouted and it dropped the koran, which, thinking that it would serve for supper, I secured and tied to my saddle, unfortunately by its head, not by its feet. We rode on and I noticed that the eagle and its mate followed us. In the end the jerking of the horse separated the koran's head from its body, so that the bird fell to the ground. In a moment the eagle had it again and sailed away in triumph.

By the way, I still possess that knife with which I ate the jam. It was given to me by my brother



Andrew when I was about twelve and, except for a month or two when it was lost upon the veld, from that day to this it has been in my pocket. It is wonderful that an article in daily use should have lasted so long, but I hope that it may remain to the end of the chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ANNEXATION

Doubtful attitude of Boers towards Mission—H. R. H. attends debates in Volksraad—Paul Kruger—H. R. H.'s projected journey home—Which was given up—Transvaal annexed—H. R. H. delivers copies of Proclamation and hoists British flag with Colonel Brooke.

LIFE at Pretoria was very gay during this Annexation period. We gave a ball, followed on the next evening by a children's party; the President entertained us to lunch. The English in the town gave us a great dinner in the Volksraad Zaal at which 'God save the Queen' was sung with enthusiasm, and there were many other entertainments.

But underneath all these festivities grave issues were maturing. Shortly after our arrival four hundred and fifty Boers rode into the town with the object of putting us back over the border. They were unarmed, but we discovered that they had left their rifles hidden in waggons not far away and guarded by a hundred and fifty men. If they really had any such intention, however, it evaporated after they had proceeded to the Government offices to ask what the English were doing in Pretoria and hoisted their flag in the Market Square. Then they talked a while and went away. One man, I remember, either on this or another occasion came and stood before the English flag which marked our camp, and shouted, 'O Father, O Grandfather, O Great-grandfather, rise from the dead and drive away these

red-handed wretches who have come to take our land from us, the land which we took from the Swartzels (black creatures) !'

Then he made a somewhat feeble rush for the said flag, but was collared by his friends and taken off, still apostrophising his ancestors. It all sounds very mock-heroic and absurd, and yet I repeat that there was much to justify this attitude of the Boers. After all they *had* taken the land and lived there nearly forty years, and the British Government had more or less guaranteed their independence. Of course circumstances alter cases, and, as they could not govern themselves and were about to plunge South Africa into a bloody war, our intervention was necessary, but this the more ignorant of them could scarcely be expected to understand, at any rate at first.

Many threats were uttered against us. Says Sir Theophilus Shepstone in one of his despatches of that day to Lord Carnarvon : ' Every effort had been made during the previous fortnight by, it is said, educated Hollanders who had but lately arrived in the country, to rouse the fanaticism of the Boers and to induce them to offer "bloody" resistance to what it was known I intended to do. The Boers were appealed to in the most inflammatory language by printed manifestos and memorials . . . it was urged that I had but a small escort which could easily be overpowered.'

Indeed there is no doubt that at times during these months we went in considerable risk. I will not set down all the stories that came to our ears, of how we were to be waylaid and shot on this occasion or on that, but an incident that I remember shows me that Shepstone at any rate thought there was something in them. One night I and another member of the staff—I think it was Morcom—were at work late, copying

despatches in a room of the building which afterwards became Government House. This room had large windows opening on to a verandah, and over these we had not drawn the curtains. Sir Theophilus came in and scolded us, saying that we ought to remember that we made a very easy target against that lighted background. Then he drew the curtains with his own hand.

The Volksraad met and discussed all kinds of matters, but nothing came of their labours, except the appointment of a Commission to examine into the state of the country and confer with H.M.'s Special Commissioner. I attended some of their debates and remember the scene well. They were held in a long, low room down the centre of which stood a deal table. Round this table sat some thirty members, most of them Boers. At the head of the room sat the Chairman at a little raised desk, by the side of which stood a chair for the use of the President of the State when he visited the Volksraad. Among the members was Paul Kruger, then a middle-aged man with a stern, thick face and a squat figure. At one of these sittings I obtained his autograph, a curious piece of calligraphy which I am sorry to say I have lost. We saw a good deal of 'Oom Paul' in those days, for on several occasions he visited the Special Commissioner. Generally I showed him in and out, and I recollect that the man impressed me more than did any of the other Boers.

In after days I knew that Volksraad Zaal well enough, for when I became Master and Registrar of the High Court I used to sit in it just beneath the judge.

Doubtless I wrote a good many letters home at this time, but I imagine that they were destroyed either on receipt or perhaps after my mother's death. Four or five of them, however, my father preserved, apparently because they refer to money matters. A little

while ago my brother William<sup>1</sup> found them when rummaging through papers at Bradenham, and kindly sent them to me. I have just re-read them for the first time, and, as a full generation has gone by since they were written, I find the experience strange and in a sense sad. The intervening years seem to fall away ; the past arises real and vivid, and I see myself a slim, quick-faced young fellow seated in that room at Pretoria inditing these epistles which I had so long forgotten. They are written in a much better hand than I can boast to-day, every word being clear and every letter well formed, which doubtless was a result of my despatch work. I will copy some extracts.

PRETORIA, S.A.R.: *March 13, 1877.*

MY DEAR FATHER,—Since my last letter matters have been rapidly advancing and drawing to a close. The Raad, after making a last move at once futile and foolish, has prorogued itself and left matters to take their course. Things are also looking much more peaceable, and I do not think that there will be any armed resistance. At one time an outbreak seemed imminent, in which case we should have run a very fair chance of being potted on our own stoep. . . . I spoke a day or two ago to the Chief as to my taking home the despatches, and he told me that he could not send me as the *bearer* of the despatches, 1st : because it was no longer done except through foreign territories ; 2nd : because I might be delayed on the road by sickness or accidents, and that in performing a long journey of the sort a mail-bag had a better chance of getting safely and swiftly to its destination than a messenger. ‘But,’ he said, ‘I will send you *with* the despatches and with credentials to the Colonial authorities, empowering you to give such information as my despatches do not and cannot contain, which is a great deal’ (Sir T. is not a voluminous writer), ‘and in this way you will be a living despatch.’

<sup>1</sup> Sir Rider's eldest brother, the late Sir W. H. D. Haggard, K.C.M.G., at that time Minister at Rio.—ED.

This is perhaps not quite so good as taking the actual letters, since I shall not get my expenses, but as far as regards other things it will answer my purpose equally well. It will be something to my name in case I wish or am obliged at any future time to avail myself of it. Besides it is indirectly a great compliment to myself. Any young fellow can carry despatches, but it is not everybody of my age and short experience who would be trusted to give private information on so important a subject as the unexpected annexation of a splendid territory as large as Great Britain, information which may very probably be made use of in Parliament. Since I have been here I have done my best to study the question and to keep myself informed as to every detail, and I get my reward in this manner. . . .

I think that I shall come home *via* the Cape. It will be a stiff journey, 1200 miles in a post-cart, but it will be a thing to have done, and I want if possible to get to London at the same time as the despatches announcing the Annexation. When the Proclamation will go I cannot say, but I think it will be in the course of the next fortnight. We received news to-night that the troops and guns are on the way to Newcastle. I shall start by the mail following the issue of the Proclamation.

We are going on as usual here working in the dark (we are beginning to emerge now) and waiting the result. It has been an anxious business, but I think that we are all right now.

I had rather that my letters were not shown, as we do not quite know what line the Home Government is going to take, and I have spoken pretty plainly. [All these letters to which I refer here are missing.—H. R. H.]

It was after my return from Secocoeni's and, I think, within a day or two of the Proclamation being issued, that I received that harsh epistle from my father of which I have written earlier in this book, that, as I have said, caused me at the last moment not to start for England. It was a very foolish act on my part, as the reader who studies the facts will see. I should have remembered that when he wrote his letter my

father could not have known that I was coming home in this important position, namely to give *viva-voce* information to Lord Carnarvon as to all the circumstances connected with the Annexation. Nor, although I have little doubt that my mother and my sister Mary, now Baroness A. d'Anethan, were privy to the secret and private reasons for my journey, to which I have also already alluded, was he perhaps aware of them. However, so I acted in my hurt pride and anger, and there the thing remains. I may say in excuse of this want of judgment that I was very young, only twenty, and that I had to make up my mind on the spot while, as the Zulus say, 'my heart was cut in two.'

Moreover I repeat my belief that the finger of Fate was at work in the matter, how and why perhaps we should have to go back, or forward, ages or æons to explain. Years ago I came to the conclusion that our individual lives and the accidents which influence them are not the petty things they seem to be, but rather a part of some great scheme whereof we know neither the beginning nor the end. The threads of our destinies, in black or in scarlet or in sombre grey, appear and disappear before our mortal eyes, but who can figure out the tapestry that they help to weave? That picture lies beyond our ken or even our imagining.

The insect sees more than the worm, the snake more than the insect, the dog more than the snake, and the man, erect in his pride, more than all of them. But how much does the man see of the whole great universe, or even of this little earth?

To the best of my belief I answered my father's letter, which I think I destroyed upon the spot, very briefly, saying that I had abandoned my idea of coming home. Apparently this letter was not pre-

served. One remains, however, which appears to allude to the subject, and from it I quote some extracts.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,  
PRETORIA, TRANSVAAL: *June 1, 1877.*

MY DEAR FATHER,—I have to acknowledge your two letters dated respectively 27th March and the 4th April. I do not think that it will be of any good to dwell any more on what is to me, in some ways at least, a rather painful subject. . . .

I received to-day my letter of appointment as English Clerk to the Colonial Secretary's Office with a salary of £250 per annum. I have not yet got my appointment as Clerk to the Executive Council, which will be worth nominally £100 per annum, but in reality only £50. It was to have been gazetted to-morrow with the other, but the Chief thought it better to wait. However, unless something occurs, I shall get it before long, as soon as there is an Executive to be Clerk to. The reason that £50 is to be knocked off is that it is not desirable to give offence by making my pay higher than that of any other clerk in the service, and though virtually I shall stand first on the list, it is thought better that I should not be nominally either under or over the one or two drawing equal pay. My position as 'English Clerk' will be a perfectly independent one. The English work of the office will be in my hands, and as it now far more than equals the Dutch and will increase day by day, of course it is the most important part of the business and will soon swamp the other.

The reason of the delay in my appointment is that there has been a difference of opinion about it between the Chief and Mr. Osborn, who is to be Colonial Secretary and consequently my Head of Department and, under the Governor, of the whole service. The Chief wished me to stop on with him as Despatch Clerk with the same salary, and Osborn wanted me in his office. In the end they compromised it: my appointment is made out as above, and when I am wanted at Government House I am to go there. On the whole I would rather have it as it is, for the work will be more interesting though harder, and the position, on the whole, better.

So much for the appointment itself; now as regards its



future probable or possible results. . . . It is far better to take service here than in Natal. In five years Natal will be to this country what Ireland is to England. To begin with, the Transvaal is more than six times its size. If the Transvaal at all realises what is expected of it, it will before long, with its natural wealth and splendid climate, be one of the most splendid foreign possessions of the British Crown, and if as is probable gold is discovered in large quantities, it may take a sudden rush forward, and then one will be borne up with it. So that whatever happens I think that I shall always do pretty well here. However, my aim is of course to rise to the position of a Colonial Governor, and to do that I must trust to good fortune and my interest. I may, or I may not, according to circumstances. At any rate I have now got my foot on the first rung of the Colonial ladder, and D.V. I intend to climb it. Whether I have done better than I should have done by first reading for the Bar I do not know: there is much to be said on both sides. The great thing is that I am now independent and shall, I hope, put you to no more expense or trouble, of both of which I am afraid I have given you too much already.

This brings me to the subject of money. I am very sorry to see from your letter that I have overdrawn to the amount of £25. I must have miscalculated, as I was under the impression that sum made up the £200. I believe however that if you think it over you will not consider that I have been very extravagant. You always calculated that the £200 would last two years, and it is nearly two years since I left England' (if I remember right it was this very day two years ago that I decided to come to Natal). I have had to draw more lately, owing to the heavy expenses I have had to meet in connection with this Mission. Horses, arms and servants cannot be had for nothing, and I had to provide myself with all. If I get any pay for this business that will at all enable me to do so I hope that you will allow me to remit the £25. If not I fear I shall have to draw on you once more for £20 in order to meet some debts which I must pay before the month is up in connection with the transshipping of my baggage to Cape Town and back, etc. I shall be very sorry to put you to that expense, my dear Father, but I trust that it will be the last time I shall

ever have to do so. As to pay for this business, I live in hope. I rather fear that the Chief may consider that the fact of accepting service under this Government may cancel all past debts, but still I shall have a shot for it.

*June 5, 1877.*

MY DEAR FATHER,—I thanked the Chief the other day for the appointment, and he told me that he hoped it would be a good deal better soon, but that he was not sufficiently firm in his seat yet to make big appointments.

I don't at all know how I am going to live here, and I fear that I shall be obliged to build a house. Mr. Osborn gave me a hint the other day that I should be welcome to a room in his house when he gets settled. He has not got a house yet: there are none to get. The probabilities are that I shall stay in this country for many years, so I shall have to build something sooner or later. It will be the cheapest way and by far the most comfortable. However I shall try to shift along for the present, live in a tent or something, until I hear about that money. I hope that it is not saddled with conditions [this refers to a legacy of £500 which had been left to me many years before by a godparent.—H. R. H.]. The scarcity of money here is something extraordinary. Till within a month or two, the few who had any lent it on security often three times the value of the sum lent, at the rate of 15 per cent. per annum. The Annexation has had a wonderful effect. An 'erf' or building site that would have sold for £40 before is now valued at £130.

Ever your most affectionate and dutiful son,

H. RIDER HAGGARD.

To return to public affairs. Ten days after our arrival at Pretoria from Secocoeni's country the Transvaal was annexed to the British Crown. Of the actual history of the events surrounding that annexation I purpose to say little, as I have already written a full and true account of it in my book, 'Cetewayo and his White Neighbours.' On one point, however, I will touch.

On the 11th April, the day before the Annexation, Shepstone sent a message to Cetewayo ; I myself saw the messenger despatched. This message told the Zulu king of the rumours that had reached Pretoria as to his intention of attacking the Transvaal, and ordered him, if these were true—which they were—to disband his armies, as the Transvaal was about to become the Queen's land. In due course came Cetewayo's answer. It is given in 'Cetewayo and his White Neighbours,' and I will quote only a few lines here.

I thank my father Sompseu for his message. I am glad that he has sent it because the Dutch have tired me out and I intended to fight them once and once only and to drive them over the Vaal. Kabana [name of messenger], you see my impis [armies] are gathered. It was to fight the Dutch I called them together ; now I will send them back to their homes.

It is my firm and fixed belief that at this juncture no one except Shepstone could have prevented the Zulus from sweeping the Transvaal or, at any rate, from attempting so to do.

The great day came at length. On April 12, 1877, at some time in the forenoon—I think it was about eleven o'clock—we, the members of the staff, marched down to the Market Square, where a crowd was assembled, Sir Theophilus remaining at the building which afterwards became Government House. I do not remember that our little escort of twenty-five Mounted Police were with us. They may have been, but I think it probable that they were left near the person of the Special Commissioner. That there was a possibility of trouble we all knew, for many threats had been made, but in that event twenty-five policemen would not have helped us much.

Everything being arranged decently and in order, Osborn stepped forward and read the Proclamation, which was received with cheers by the crowd, that of course was largely composed of English folk or of those who were not unsympathetic. After this ceremony was completed the ex-President Burgers' formal protest, of which the draft had already been submitted to the Commissioner and approved by him, was also read, and received respectfully but in silence. The text of these historical documents can be studied in the Blue-books of the day, if anybody ever reads an old Blue-book, so I will not dwell upon them here.

I recall that after everything was over it became my duty to deliver copies of the Proclamation, and of another document under which Sir Theophilus assumed the office of Administrator of the new Government, at the various public offices. In front of one of these offices—I remember its situation but not which one of them it was—was gathered a crowd of sullen-looking Boers who showed no disposition to let me pass upon my business. I looked at them and they looked at me. I advanced, purposing to thrust my way between two of them, and as still they would not let me pass I trod upon the foot of one of them, half expecting to be shot as I did so, whereon the man drew back and let me go about my duty. It was insolent, I admit, and had I been an older man probably I should have withdrawn and left the Proclamation undelivered. But I do not think that the incident was without its effect, for it did not pass unobserved. I was but one young fellow facing a hostile crowd which had gathered in the remoter spaces of the square, but for the moment I was the representative of England, and I felt that if I recoiled before their muttered threats and oaths, inferences might be drawn. Therefore I went on.

Whatever happened to me I was determined to deliver my Proclamation as I had been ordered to do, or to fail because I must.

My colleague, Major Clarke, had to deal with the same difficulty, but on a much more heroic scale. The story as he told it to me afterwards is as follows. He was sent down to take command of the filibustering volunteers at Leydenburg. Arriving at the largest fort with only his Zulu servant, Lanky Boy, for an aide-de-camp, he at once ordered the Republican flag to be hauled down and the Union Jack to be hoisted, which order, somewhat to his astonishment, was promptly obeyed. A day or two afterwards, however, the volunteers repented them of their surrender and arrived in his tent to shoot him. Clarke fixed the eyeglass he always wore in his eye, looked at them steadfastly through it, waved his one arm and remarked in his rich Irish accent, 'You are all drunk. Go away.' So they went.

This Lanky Boy, a jolly, open-faced Kaffir, was a good stick to lean on at a pinch. Once two natives waylaid Clarke, but Lanky Boy killed them both and saved his life.

After the Annexation things settled down rapidly, and when, some three weeks later, the 1st Battalion of the 13th Regiment marched into Pretoria with the band playing, it was extremely well received both there and all along the road. On May 24th, Queen Victoria's birthday, the British flag was formally hoisted at Pretoria in the presence of a large gathering of English, Boers and natives. The band played 'God save the Queen,' the artillery boomed a salute, and at midday precisely, amidst the cheers of the crowd, Colonel Brooke, R.E., and I ran up the flag to the head of the lofty staff. I think that Brooke lifted it from the

ground and broke it and that I did the actual hoisting, but of these details I am not quite sure ; it may have been the other way about. In view of what followed it ought to have stuck half-way, but it did not. It was a proud moment for me and for all of us, but could we have foreseen what was to happen in the future we should have felt less jubilant.

In one of the newly discovered letters to my mother, written from Government House, Pretoria, on June 17, 1877, I find an allusion to this hoisting of the flag. I say :

We have Sir A. Cunynghame, K.C.B., stopping with us now ; he starts for Leydenburg next Friday for shooting. On the same day the Chief starts for Potchefstroom and Lichtenburg, and will be away about five weeks. Mr. Henderson, Chairman of the Finance Committee, will be left alone with myself here. It will be a melancholy reduction of our large party. We are now waiting with great anxiety to hear how the Annexation has been received. I suppose that the war<sup>1</sup> has drawn most of the attention from this business. It will be some years before people at home realise how great an act it has been, an act without a parallel. I am very proud of having been connected with it. Twenty years hence it will be a great thing to have hoisted the Union Jack over the Transvaal for the first time.

My absence, which I remember we set down at five years at the most, is likely to be a long one now, my dearest Mother. The break from all home and family ties and the sense of isolation are very painful, more painful than those who have never tried them know.

<sup>1</sup> Probably this is an allusion to the Russo-Turkish War.—H. R. H.

## CHAPTER VI

### LIFE IN THE TRANSVAAL

H. R. H. appointed Master of the High Court at age of twenty-one—Boers very litigious—Fleeced by lawyers—H. R. H. reforms practice and taxes bills—Much opposition—H. R. H. supported by Judge Kotzé—Boer revolt expected—Zulu War threatened—H. R. H. builds house with Cochrane—Jess's cottage—Sir Bartle Frere—Zulu War—Isandhlwana—Shepstone returns home—Treated shabbily by Government—H. R. H. joins Pretoria Horse—Elected Adjutant—Ordered to Zululand—Orders countermanded—Regiment to defend Pretoria against possible Boer revolt—H. R. H. sent in command of detachment to watch force of 3000 Boers—Exciting incidents but war postponed—Sir Bartle Frere at Pretoria—Estimate of his character—Anthony Trollope—Journeys on circuit with Judge Kotzé—Herd of blesbuck—Pretoria Horse disbanded—H. R. H. resigns Mastership of High Court—Buys farm in Natal with Cochrane to breed ostriches.

NOT very long after the Annexation the Master and Registrar of the High Court died, and after some reflection the Government appointed me to act in his place. It is not strange that they should have hesitated, seeing that I was barely twenty-one years of age and had received no legal training. Moreover in those days the office was one of great importance.

To put it mildly, the lawyers who frequented the Transvaal courts were not the most eminent of their tribe. Indeed some of them had come thither because of difficulties that had attended their careers in other lands. Thus one of them was reported to have committed a murder and to have fled from the arm of justice. Another subsequently became notorious in connection with the treatment of the loyal prisoners at the siege of Potchefstroom. He was fond of music,

and it is said that before two of these unfortunate men were executed, or rather murdered, he took them into a church and soothed their feelings by playing the 'Dead March in Saul' over them. He, by the way, was the original of my character of Frank Muller in 'Jess.' Even those of the band who had nothing against them were tainted by a common fame: they all overcharged. It was frequently their practice to open their bill of costs with an item of fifty guineas set down as 'retaining fee,' and this although they were not advocates but attorneys who were allowed to plead.

In those days the Boers were extraordinarily litigious; it was not infrequent for them to spend hundreds or even thousands of pounds over the question of the ownership of a piece of land that was worth little. So it came about that before the Annexation they were most mercilessly fleeced by the lawyers into whose hands they fell. This was the situation which I was called upon to face. Also as Master I held another important office, that of the official Guardian of the estates of all the orphans in the Transvaal.

I entered on my duties with fear and trembling, but very soon grasped the essential facts of the case. One of the first bills that was laid before me was for £600. I taxed it down by one-half. Then, either over this or some other bill, the row began. The lawyers petitioned against me without avail. They appealed from my decision to the High Court, again without avail, for Mr. Justice Kotzé supported me. For a whole day was that bill argued in court, with the result that I was ultimately ordered to restore an amount of, I think, six and eightpence!

Considerable percentage fees were payable to Government on these taxed bills, and for a while



I trusted to those who presented the bills to hand over these sums to the Treasury. By an accident I discovered that this was not always done. So I invented a system of stamps which had to be affixed to the bill before I signed it. In short the struggle was long and arduous, but in the end I won the day, with the result that I and my flock became the best of friends. I think that when I left them they were sincerely sorry. I remember that in one case, a very important divorce action which occupied the court for more than a week, the petition was dismissed not because the adultery was not proved but on the ground of collusion. Of this collusion the parties were innocent, but the evidence showed that the petitioner's solicitor had actually drafted some of the pleas for the defendant's solicitor and in other ways had been the source of the said collusion, thus causing his client to lose the case. On this ground I disallowed all his bill of costs, except the out-of-pocket expenses. No appeal was entered against this decision.

Of the surviving letters which I sent home at this period of my life several deal with my appointment to the office of Master and Registrar of the Transvaal High Court, and others with public affairs. From these I quote some extracts.

PRETORIA : *Dec. 10, 1877.*

MY DEAREST MOTHER,— . . . Our chief excitement just now is the Zulu business. It is to be hoped that the Chief will stave it off till April, because the horse-sickness would render all cavalry useless at this time of year. I do not suppose that the Home Government will help, though perhaps they may, the Conservatives being in. If we have to fight by ourselves it will doubtless be at great risk and cost of life. You see, unless public opinion presses, the Home Government is always glad to set a thing of the sort down as a scare, and

to let ' those troublesome fellows settle it somehow.' But I do not think that this is a matter that can be settled without an appeal to arms and one last struggle between the white and black races. That it will be a terrible fight there is no doubt ; the Zulus are brave men, as reckless about death as any Turk. They are panting for war, for they have not ' washed their spears ' since the battle of the Tugela in 1856, when the two brothers fought for the throne, and when the killed on one side alone amounted to 9000 men. They will come now to drive the white men back into the ' Black Water,' or to break their power, and die in the attempt.

I think I told you that their plan of battle is to engage us in the open for three days and three nights. They say they intend to begin by firing three rounds and then charge in from every side. It will be a magnificent sight to see about twenty thousand of those fellows sweeping down, but perhaps more picturesque than pleasant. However, I have little doubt but that we shall beat them. Besides the thing may blow over. I am going to volunteer this afternoon. . . . I see that Sir Henry is getting unpopular in Natal. All the papers are pitching into him for being too ' timid and cautious.' He will be in a terrible way about this Zulu business. . . .

*P.S.*—I have just ' taken the shilling ' as a cavalry volunteer.

PRETORIA : *Feb. 11, 1878.*

MY DEAREST MOTHER,— . . . We are rather in a state of excitement (as usual), as the Boers are making some decided manifestations against us, and even talking of summoning the Volksraad. They think because we are quiet we are afraid. I should not at all wonder if we had a row, and in many ways it would not be a bad thing. Paul Kruger when he came back was entirely with us, but since his return has become intimidated by the blood-and-thunder party and now declares that he considers himself to be still Vice-President of the country. There are some very amusing stories told of him whilst in London ; when asked what made the greatest impression on him there, he replied the big horses in the carts, and Lord Carnarvon's butler ! ' He was a " mooi carle "' (beautiful fellow).

PRETORIA: March 4, 1878.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,— . . . At home you seem rather alarmed about the state of affairs here, and it is not altogether reassuring. The Zulu business hangs fire, but that cloud will surely burst. Luckily the action Sir Henry Bulwer has taken has thrown much of the future responsibility on his shoulders. . . . It is not for a moment to be supposed that Cetewayo will be bound by any decree given against him. . . . Our most pressing danger now is the Boers. They really seem to mean business this time. From every direction we hear of their preparations, etc. According to the latest news they are coming in on the 16th inst., or else on the 5th of April, five thousand strong, to demand back the Government. This of course will be refused. Then they are going to try to rush the camp and powder magazine and, I suppose, burn the town. I am still sceptical about it: not that I doubt that they would like to do it. I dare say they will be tempted by the small number of troops here (we have only 250 men). . . . I am one of the marked men who are to be instantly hung on account of that Secocoeni article I wrote.<sup>1</sup> Some spiteful brute translated it into Dutch with comments and published it in the local papers. The Boers are furious; there are two things they cannot bear—the truth and ridicule. . . . It is precious little I care about them and their threats. . . . The abuse showered on the heads of the unfortunate English officials here is something simply awful. You would not know me again if you could see me as I appear in the *Volkstemm* leaders. However, it amuses them and does not hurt us. I only hope that when the Chief comes back (we expect him next Monday) he will take strong measures. He has been too lenient, and consequently they have blackguarded him up hill and down dale.

P.S.—I have a pleasing duty to perform early to-morrow—go and see a man executed.

Very well do I remember the experience alluded to in this postscript. The individual referred to was a Kaffir chief of high blood, I think the Swazi who was

<sup>1</sup> See p. 136.—ED.



*Photo: Steger Studio, Pretoria*

JESS' COTTAGE



responsible for the killing of Mr. Bell in order to avoid the payment of taxes. I cannot recall his name. He was a most dignified and gentlemanlike person. At the execution the interpreter asked him if he had anything to say before he died. He began to repeat his version of the affair with which we were already acquainted, and on being stopped, remarked, 'I have spoken ; I am ready.'

In the grey morning light he was then led to the scaffold erected in the prison yard. He walked to it and examined the noose and other arrangements. The executioner proved to be hopelessly drunk ; a black Christian preacher wearing a battered tall hat prayed over the doomed man. The High Sheriff, Juta, overcome by the spectacle, retired into a corner of the yard, where he was violently ill. The thing had to be done, and between a drunken executioner and an overcome High Sheriff it devolved upon me. So I stood over that executioner and forced him to perform his office. Thus died this brave Swazi gentleman.

PRETORIA : *Sunday, March 31, 1878.*

MY DEAR FATHER,—Very many thanks for your long and kind letter of 20th Feb. 1878 and all the advice it contained. With what you say I to a very great extent agree. I had some idea of shifting, but recent events have considerably altered my plans. I think that unless something unexpected occurs I am now certain of the Master and Registrarship here, which will be worth £400 a year—with a probable increase of pay in two or three years. It will also make me a head of Department, which at the age of twenty-one is not so bad. However, experience has taught me that it is foolish to count one's chickens before they are hatched, so as I have not actually been appointed the less said about it at present the better. Even supposing I do not get it I am not sure that I should change unless I got the offer of something very good. This is a new country where there are very few above me, and

a country which must become rich and rising—also the climate is good. However, I shall of course be guided by circumstances, and if I should do so I am sure you will understand that it will be because I thought it on the whole best.

Of course the lawyers are making a desperate stand against my appointment, but with very little effect. It does not at all suit their book. They want to get in a man of the old clique who would not be above a 'consideration.' When first I acted one of them tried it on indirectly with me, wanted to pay me double fees for some Commissioner's work, but I think I rather startled him.

The next letter runs as follows :

PRETORIA : *April 7, 1878.*

MY DEAR FATHER,—I have to tell you what I am sure you will be glad to hear, namely, that I have won the day with reference to my appointment as Master and Registrar. I have seen H.E.'s minute to Sec. to Govt., so I am certain about it now. The last question has also been settled in my favour, *i.e.* whether I was to receive £300 or £400 per annum. I believe I am by far the youngest head of Department in South Africa. I have also the satisfaction of knowing that my promotion has not been due to any favouritism. My connection with the Chief has been against me rather than otherwise, because people in his position are very slow about doing anything that can be construed into favouritism. He was good enough, I believe, to speak very kindly about me when he settled the matter of my appointment this morning, saying that 'he thought very highly of me and was sure that I should rise.' This turn of affairs to a great extent settles the question of my going anywhere else. I am very glad to have got the better of those lawyers who petitioned against me, and also to have held the office so much to the satisfaction of the Government as to justify them in appointing so young a man. When I began to act eight months since I had not the slightest knowledge of my work, a good deal of which is of course technical, and what is more there were no records, no books, indeed nothing from which I could form an idea of it, nor had I anyone to teach me. In addition I had to deal with a lot

of gentlemen whose paths were the paths of self-seeking, who did their utmost to throw obstacles in my way. These difficulties I have, I am glad to say, to a great extent overcome, and I intend now to make myself thoroughly master of my position. Of course the very fact of my rapid rise will make me additional enemies, especially the five or six disappointed candidates, but I don't mind that. . . .

PRETORIA, TRANSVAAL : *June 2, 1878.*

MY DEAR FATHER,— . . . I could not help being a little amused at the alarm everybody seems to be in at home about us here. The crisis which frightened you and which was really alarming at the time has long since passed, and I remain unhung. [I cannot remember to what crisis this refers.—H. R. H.] There is however a still blacker cloud over us now. Sir Garnet's famous thunder-cloud of thirty thousand armed Zulus is, I think, really going to burst at last. It must come some time, so I think it may as well come now. We shall have to fight like rats in a corner, but we shall lick them and there will be an end of it. I do not think a Zulu war will be a long one: they will not hide in kloofs and mountains, but come into the open and fight it out.

In a letter I got from you nearly a year ago you said that if I wanted £500 and the trustees would consent, you thought it might be advanced to me. If you still think so, and it could be done without inconvenience to anybody, it would be useful to me now to invest. I would guarantee 6 per cent. on it. Of course I only ask for it if it can be done without hampering you or my mother. I am going, as I told you, to build a nice house with Cochrane. In a place of this sort it is a great thing to have a pleasant home, and it will also be a very sound investment. I have bought two acres at the top end of the town for this purpose, where land will soon become very valuable. . . .

H. RIDER HAGGARD.

This house I built. We named it 'The Palatial,' and it has since become well known as 'Jess's Cottage.' It was a funny little place consisting of two rooms,



a kitchen, etc., and having a tin roof. I remember how tiny it looked when the foundations were dug out. I believe that it still stands in Pretoria. At any rate an illustration of it was published in the issue of *South Africa* dated February 4, 1911, but if it is really the same building it has been much added to and altered. The blue gums in the picture are undoubtedly those we planted; they are very big trees now, I am told. I suppose the vineyard we made in front of the house has vanished long ago, and indeed that streets run across its site.

The Cochrane alluded to in the letter is Mr. Arthur H. D. Cochrane, who came to the Transvaal with Mr. (afterwards Sir William) Sergeant, one of the Crown Agents, who was sent out by the Home Government to investigate its finances. We struck up a close friendship which has endured unimpaired through all the succeeding years. I am thankful to say he is still living, a man of almost exactly my own age.

During the period covered by these letters home I was overtaken by a very sore trouble. The love affair to which I have alluded earlier in this book unexpectedly developed, not at my instance, with the result that for some little space of time I imagined myself to be engaged and was proportionately happy. Then one day the mail cart arrived and all was over. It was a crushing blow, so crushing that at the time I should not have been sorry if I could have departed from the world. Its effects upon me also were very bad indeed, for it left me utterly reckless and unsettled. I cared not what I did or what became of me. Here I will leave this subject of which even now I feel it painful to write, especially after a morning spent in the perusal of old letters, some of them indited by the dead.

In the autumn of 1878 Sir Bartle Frere, the High

Commissioner for South Africa, had arrived in Natal; and towards the end of the year—I think it was in November—he issued his famous ultimatum to the Zulus.

Respecting Sir Bartle as I do, agreeing with him generally as I do, and sympathising with him from the bottom of my heart as to the shameless treatment which he received from British party politicians after his policy seemed to have failed and the British arms had suffered defeat, I still think, perhaps erroneously, that this ultimatum was a mistake. Although the argument is all on his side, I incline to the view that it would have been wiser to remonstrate with the Zulus and trust to the doctrine of chances—for this reason: neither Cetewayo nor his people wished to fight the English; had Cetewayo wished it he would have swept Natal from end to end after our defeat at Isandhlwana. But what I heard he said at the time was to this effect: ‘The English are attacking me in my country, and I will defend myself in my country. I will not send my impis to kill them in Natal, because I and those who went before me have always been good friends with the English.’ So it came about that he forbade his generals to cross the boundary of Natal.

Whichever view may be right, the fact remains that the ultimatum was issued and from that moment war became inevitable. Our generals and soldiers entered on it with the lightest hearts; notwithstanding the difficulties and scarcity of transport they even took with them their cricketing outfit into Zululand. This I know, since I was commissioned to bring home a wicket that was found on the field of Isandhlwana, and return it to the headquarters of a regiment to which it belonged, to be kept as a relic. The disaster at Isandhlwana I for one expected. Indeed I remember writing

to friends prophesying that it would occur, and their great astonishment when on the same day that they received the letter the telegraph brought the news of that great destruction. This far-sightedness, however, was not due to my own perspicacity, but to the training that I had received under those who knew the Zulus better than any other men in the world.

One of these, Mr. Osborn, who afterwards was appointed Resident in Zululand, was so disturbed by what he knew was coming that, after a good deal of reflection, he wrote a solemn warning of what would occur to the troops if their plan of advance were persisted in, which warning he sent to Lord Chelmsford through the officer commanding at Pretoria. It was never even acknowledged. I think that I saw this letter, or, if I did not, Osborn told me all about it.

The disaster at Isandhlwana occurred on January 22, 1879. A night or two before it happened a lady whom I knew in Pretoria dreamed a dream which she detailed to me on the following day. I am sorry to say that I cannot remember all this dream. What I recall of it is to the effect that she saw a great plain in Zululand on which English troops were camped. Snow began to fall on the plain, snow that was blood-red, till it buried it and the troops. Then the snow melted into rivers of blood.

The lady whom it visited was convinced that this dream portended some frightful massacre, but of course it may have sprung from the excited and fearful feeling in the air which naturally affected all who had relatives or friends at the front.

A stranger and more inexplicable occurrence happened to myself. On the morning of the 23rd of January, which was the day after the slaughter, I saw the

Hottentot *wrouw* who washed our clothes in the garden of 'The Palatial' and went out to speak to her. The fat old woman was in a great state of perturbation, and when I asked her what was the matter, she told me that terrible things had happened in Zululand; that the 'rooibatjes,' that is, redcoats, lay upon the plain 'like leaves under the trees in winter,' killed by Cetewayo. I inquired when this event had occurred, and she replied, on the previous day. I told her that she was speaking falsehoods, since even if it were so no horse could have brought the news over two hundred miles of veld in the course of a single night. She stuck to her story but refused to tell me how it had been learned by her, and we parted.

The old woman's manner impressed me so much that I ordered a horse to be saddled and, riding down to the Government offices, repeated what I had heard to Mr. Osborn and others. They too said that it was not possible for the tidings to have come to Pretoria in the time. Still they were uneasy, thinking that something might have happened at an earlier date, and made inquiries without results. I believe it was twenty hours later that a man on an exhausted horse galloped into Pretoria with the evil news.

How did the old Hottentot woman learn the truth? It could not have been called from mountain-top to mountain-top after the Kaffir fashion, since the intervening country was high veld where there are no mountains. I have no explanation to offer, except that the natives have, or had, some almost telegraphic method of conveying news of important events of which the nature is quite unknown to us white men.

The consternation at Pretoria was very great, especially as the news reached us in a much-exaggerated form. No wonder that we were perturbed, since there

were few who had not lost some that were dear to them. Thus one of Sir Theophilus's sons was killed, and for a while he thought that three had gone. Afterwards his skeleton was recognised by some peculiarity connected with his teeth. Osborn had lost a son-in-law, and so on. Personally I knew many of the officers of the 24th who fell, but the one I mourned most was the gallant Coghill, with whom I had become very friendly when he was at Pretoria as aide-de-camp to Sir Arthur Cunynghame. He was a peculiarly light-hearted young man full of good stories, some of which I remember to this day.

As the reader will remember, he and Melville died back to back in a vain attempt to save the colours of the regiment, which colours were afterwards recovered from the bed of the river. I would refer any who are interested in this sad history to 'The True Story Book,' published by Messrs. Longmans in 1893, where I have told the tale of Isandhlwana and Rorke's Drift. That account may be taken as accurate, for two reasons: first, I was well acquainted with the circumstances at the time and saw many of those concerned in the matter, and, secondly, I sent the proofs to be checked by my friend Colonel Essex, who was one of the three or four officers in camp who survived the disaster, as subsequently he did those of Laing's Neck and Ingogo.

I remember that I asked Essex, a man with a charmed life if ever such a gift was granted, what he thought of during that terrible ride from the Place of the Little Hand to the Buffalo River. He told me that all he could remember was a kind of refrain which came into his mind. It ran, 'Essex, you — fool, you had a chance of a good billet at home, and now, Essex, you are going to be killed!' The story has a certain grim humour; also it shows how on

desperate occasions, as I have noted more than once in life, the stunned intelligence takes refuge in little things. Everything else is beaten flat, like the sea beneath a tornado, leaving only such bubbles floating in the unnatural calm.

Not very long after this terrible event Sir Theophilus Shepstone was summoned home to confer with the Colonial Office respecting the affairs of the Transvaal, and well do I remember the sorrow with which we parted from him. I remember also that before this time, when all was going well, in the course of one of those intimate conversations to which he admitted me I congratulated him upon what then appeared to be his great success, and said that he seemed to have everything before him.

‘No, my boy,’ he answered, shaking his head sadly, ‘it has come to me too late in life,’ and he turned away with a sigh.

As a matter of fact his success proved to be none at all, for he lived to see all his work undone within a year or two and to find himself thrown an offering to the Moloch of our party system, as did his contemporary, Sir Bartle Frere. And yet after all was it so? He did what was right, and he did it well. The exigencies of our home politics, stirred into action by the rebellion of the Boers, appeared to wreck his policy. At the cost of I know not how many English lives and of how much treasure, that policy was reversed: the country was given back. What ensued? A long period of turmoil and difficulties, and then a war which cost us twenty thousand more lives and two hundred and fifty millions more of treasure to bring about what was in practice the same state of affairs that Sir Theophilus Shepstone had established over twenty years before without the firing of a single shot.

A little more wisdom, a little more firmness or foresight, and these events need never have occurred. They were one of Mr. Gladstone's gifts to his country.

But the very fact of their occurrence shows that Shepstone, on whose shoulders everything rested at the time, was right in his premises. He said in effect that the incorporation of the Transvaal in the Empire was an imperial necessity, and the issue has proved that he did not err. I say that the course of history has justified Sir Theophilus Shepstone and shown his opponents and detractors to be wrong, as in another case it has justified Charles Gordon and again proved those same opponents and detractors to be wrong. On their heads be all the wasted lives and wealth. I am sure that the future will declare that he was right in everything that he did, for if it was not so why is the Transvaal now a Province of the British Empire? Nothing can explain away the facts; they speak for themselves.

How shocking, how shameless was the treatment meted out to Shepstone personally—I presume for purely political reasons, since I cannot conceive that he had any individual enemies—is well shown by the following letter from him to me which through a pure accident chances to have been discovered by my brother, Sir William Haggard, amongst his own papers.

PIETERMARITZBURG, NATAL:

*July 6, 1884.*

MY DEAR HAGGARD,—I am afraid that I cannot take much credit to myself this time for giving you practical proof that I think of you by writing you a letter, for although I do as a matter of fact think of you both, almost as often as old Polly the parrot calls me a 'very domde Boer,' an expression which you taught the bird and which it has not forgotten, yet this is essentially a selfish letter written with selfish ends; but let

me assure you that it is nevertheless leavened, as strongly as ever, with the same old love.

The fact is that the Treasury at Home have made a fierce and ungenerous attack on my Transvaal accounts, and threaten to surcharge me with all items to the extent of several thousand pounds for which receipts or vouchers of some sort are not forthcoming. Among these are two small payments to you : one they call a gratuity of £25, an acknowledgment of your services to the mission for which you received no pay, and the other £20 as compensation for a horse that died on your journey as Commissioner to Sikukuni ; and I want you to be good enough to send a certificate acknowledging the payment of each of these items and stating that you signed a receipt for each when it was paid. They are under the impression that Colonel Brooke, who kept the accounts, never took care to get receipts : the fact being that he was most careful on this point ; but that the vouchers and some of the accounts also were, most of them, lost during the siege of Pretoria.

The officers of the Treasury have reflected upon my personal honesty, and Mr. Courtney has amused himself by writing some facetious paragraphs ; this has of course furnished more or less amusing reading for the society journals. The Colonial Office defended me very vigorously, but I have strongly resented such treatment and shown the injustice and untruthfulness of it, or any foundation for it, in a memo. to the Secretary of State. Meanwhile the Treasury withhold my pension.

This letter is horribly egotistical so far, but I could not help it, as I explained on the first page.

As things have turned out, it was a fortunate thing that you left this country when you did. Our condition as Englishmen, or rather the condition of our Government in regard to this country, reminds me strongly of the craven soldiers under Baker Pasha when they were beaten by the Arabs at Teb : they are described as meekly kneeling to meet their fate. That is exactly what the British Government have been doing, since Majuba, in Africa. The Boers have now taken possession of Central Zululand, and they are quite right to do so. The Government allowed anarchy to run rampant on their [the



Boers'] border ; and then publicly declared in the House of Commons that they intended to leave the Zulus to settle their affairs in their own way, and they called in the Boers to settle them for them on the promise of giving them land. They have made the boy Dinizulu king, and have helped the Usutu party to destroy Sibebe, who was made independent by the British Government within boundaries formally assigned and pointed out to him. This was part of their bargain. Now they [*i.e.* the Boers] are negotiating for the land they are to get, and as the king's party have got all they wanted to get out of the Boers, I shall not be surprised if some difficulty should arise between them. It was at one time feared that the Boers might not respect the Reserve, and so bring on a collision between them and the Government, and that would of course mean a very serious difficulty in the whole of South Africa ; but I hope that there is no fear of this for the present at any rate.

Poor old Osborn seems to be quite worn out by all the worry that he has had ever since he left the Transvaal, and I do not wonder at it ; he has not been allowed to rule, and yet has been required to interfere, so in the eyes of the Zulus, as indeed in those of everyone else, he is neither fish, flesh nor good red herring. . . . Sir Henry Bulwer has a very bad time of it ; he sees and says what ought to be done, but there is no response, and things are left to drift, until some eddy or other in the stream strands them. I am very sorry, often, for him ; and I [think] that if it were not for his sense of loyalty to the Government at home he would throw up. . . . I have had a serious illness since I came back from England, congestion of liver ; but am well again. With much love to you both, ✓

T. SHEPSTONE.

Can anything be more piteous than the tale the aged statesman tells in the above epistle ? He, of all men the most spotless and upright in character, to have reflections made upon his ' personal honesty,' and by the servants of the Government which he had served with such signal faithfulness throughout a long life ! Only a very little while before this letter was

written those who, or whose masters, were seeking to brand him as a common thief had come to him for help in their difficulties, asking him once more to visit Zululand and further their tortuous and wretched policy by carrying out the restoration of Cetewayo. I believe that the annexation of the Transvaal, which cost a million to surrender and two or three hundred times that sum to reconquer, was effected at an expense of about £10,000 in all. It was this comparatively insignificant sum that, nearly seven years subsequently to its disbursement, was subjected to the microscopic examination of the Treasury clerks. Vouchers, as he says, were lost or destroyed during a prolonged siege, and here was a great opportunity of throwing mud at an honoured name, and of causing its owner, already sinking towards the grave, to spend his last years in poverty by depriving him of the pension that he had earned.

Now, as I am involved in this matter—to the extent of £45 sterling—I had better defend myself, lest in due course reflections should be made upon my honesty as well as upon that of my Chief. The £25 was, I believe, given to me to cover certain out-of-pocket expenses, I being at the time totally unpaid. The £20 was compensation for a horse of more than that value which died when I was serving with the Secocoeni Commission upon a somewhat arduous business. In after years the Treasury wrote to me direct about this said horse. I answered that, so long a time having elapsed, I could not carry the details of the loss in my mind, but that to save the trouble of further correspondence I should be happy, if they wished it, to send them a cheque for the amount. To this proposal I am still awaiting a reply.

Such is the treatment that the greatest Empire in

the world can mete out to its servants if their services chance to have proved inconvenient to the political prospects of the party in power. Well, as Gunnar said in the immortal Saga, when one whom he trusted refused to help him in his uttermost need and gave him to his death, 'Every one seeks honour in his own fashion.' It would appear that the fashion of party hacks, however exalted or successful, does not always agree with the tradition and practice of the average English gentleman. But over such a matter it is easy to lose one's balance and write without a desirable moderation. So I will leave the facts to speak for themselves. It seems to me that no words of mine can make them blacker than they are, nor indeed do I wish to dwell upon them more. To me, at least, they are too painful. Let history judge.

After the Zulu disaster a mounted corps, which was christened the Pretoria Horse and composed for the most part of well-bred men, was enrolled in that town. In the emergency of the times officials were allowed to join, a permission of which I availed myself. At a preliminary meeting of the corps I was elected adjutant and one of the two lieutenants, the captain being a Mr. Jackson, a colonial gentleman of great experience.

I was, and indeed still am, very proud of the compliment thus paid to me by my comrades while I was still so young a man. We were ordered to proceed to Zululand with Weatherley's corps. As it chanced, at the last moment these orders were countermanded, which perhaps was fortunate for us, since otherwise in all human probability our bones would now be rotting beneath the soil of Zululand in company with those of the ill-fated Weatherley's Horse.

The reason for this change of plan was that of a

sudden the Boers, seeing the difficulties of the English Government and knowing that the Zulus were not now to be feared, as their hands were full, began to threaten rebellion so vigorously that it was deemed necessary to retain us for the defence of Pretoria. To the number of about three thousand men they assembled themselves upon the high veld at a distance of thirty miles from Pretoria and here formed a semi-permanent armed camp. I was sent out in command of six or eight picked men to an inn that I think was called Ferguson's, situated a few miles from this camp. We were unarmed except for our revolvers, and the object of my mission was to watch the Boers. I had my spies in the camp, and every night one or other of these men crept out and reported to me what had taken place during the day and any other information he could collect. This I forwarded to Pretoria, by letter if I thought it safe, or, if I had reason to fear that my messenger would be stopped and searched, by means of different-coloured ribbons, each of which had a prearranged significance. At different points along the road I had horsemen hidden day and night, and, as my messenger galloped up, the relief emerged to meet him, took the despatch or the ribbon, and in his turn galloped away to the next relief. In this fashion I used to get in news to the military authorities very quickly, covering the twenty-five miles of rough country in about an hour even on the darkest nights. Cochrane, I remember, was nearly killed by his horse falling with him in the blackness when engaged upon this dangerous and exciting duty.

I gather from the following document scribbled in pencil by my captain, but undated, that somehow has survived to this day, that my letters were very hurriedly written. Here it is :

DEAR HAGGARD,—Your last safely to hand. The only thing meant in my last about writing clearly was that we could hardly make out some of the words. Colonel Lanyon<sup>1</sup> said he could see that you had written in too great a hurry. It is better to take a minute longer in writing to prevent any word being misread here, which might lead to fatal results. Would you like me to send a good stock of food? It was no fault of mine that it was not taken with you. The Landdrost's instructions were imperative that the men should take nothing. Parents are wiring into me now and say they hear their sons are starving. Would you like any of the men relieved? I should not ask, but do it, only they seem to have got so very nicely into the thing that I would prefer them staying on unless you think I should send some fresh ones. I think that for the next few days it will not be necessary to send very often. However I leave this to you. We are not having *all* beer and skittles here. What with guards and fortifying, our time is well taken up. I have sent down for your letters, also Cochrane's.

Yours very sincerely,

E. JACKSON.

After a while the Boers in the camp got wind of my proceedings, and a large party of them, from thirty to fifty men I should say, rode to the inn fully armed, with the avowed intention of shooting us. In this emergency I, as the officer in command, had on the instant to make up my mind what to do. To attempt flight would, it seemed to me, betray the truth as to the reason of our presence. Moreover we should almost certainly have been captured. So I determined that we would stop where we were.

They came, they dismounted, they stormed and threatened. I on my part gave orders that no man was to suffer himself to be drawn into a quarrel or to do anything unless we were actually attacked, when all

<sup>1</sup> Colonel (afterwards Sir Owen) Lanyon succeeded Sir T. Shepstone when he went home.

had liberty to sell their lives as dearly as they could. I can see them now, standing about and sitting round the large room of the inn with their rifles between their knees. I sat in my little room surveying them through the open door, pretending to understand nothing and to be engaged in some ordinary occupation, such as reading or writing.

After an hour or so of this things came to a climax, and I began to wonder whether we had another five minutes to live. It was then that the ready resource of one of my sergeants, a fine young fellow called Glynn, saved the situation. One of the Boers paused in a furious harangue to light his pipe, and having done so threw the lighted match on to the floor. Glynn, who was standing amongst them, stepped forward, picked up the match, blew it out, and exclaimed in tones of heartfelt gratitude and relief, 'Dank Gott!' (Thank God).

The Boers stared at him, then asked, 'For what do you thank God, Englishman?'

'I thank God,' answered Glynn, who could talk Dutch perfectly, 'because we are not now all in small pieces. Do you not know, Heeren, that the British Government has stored two tons of dynamite under that floor? Is this a place to smoke pipes and throw down matches? Do you desire that all your wives should become widows, as would have happened if the fire from that match had fallen through the boards on to the dynamite underneath? Oh! thank the Lord God. Thank the Lord God!'

Now the Boers of that day had a great terror of dynamite, of the properties of which they were quite ignorant.

'Alleماغte!' said one of them. 'Alleماغte!' echoed the others.

Then they rose in a body, fearing lest we had some devilish scheme to blow them up. In a few minutes not one of them was to be seen.

Shortly after this dynamite incident I was relieved by my co-lieutenant, a very nice fellow whose name, I think, was Fell. I returned to Pretoria on a beautiful stallion which I had named Black Billy. I remember that Black Billy took me from the inn to the town in very little over the hour. Here with the rest of the corps I was stationed at the Government mule stables, not far from the nek through which I believe the Natal railway now runs.

A few nights later things grew more serious. Our pickets and scouts, to say nothing of natives, announced that the Boer laager, which, by the way, was now pitched much nearer to the town and practically besieging it, had broken up, and that the Boers to the number of several thousand were marching on Pretoria. So indeed I believe they were, but something, probably the news that we were more or less prepared to receive them, caused them to change their minds at the last moment, with the result that the attack was never actually delivered. Of this, however, we knew nothing in our mule-stable. All we knew was that at any moment we must expect to bear the first brunt of the onslaught of several thousand men, which would first impinge upon our position. For some reason which I cannot recollect, my commanding officer, Captain Jackson, was away that night; I think he had been sent on a mission by the Government and taken the other lieutenant with him, leaving me in command of the corps.

Well, I did my best. A few candles were all that I allowed, set at intervals on the floor of the long building, that they might not shine through the loop-

holes and draw the enemy's fire. I posted my best shots, Cochrane among them, upon the upper platform, and the rest at the loopholes we had prepared upon the ground floor and upon the little external bastions. Our extemporised pikes were also laid handy for immediate use.

Till dawn we waited thus, growing rather weary at the last; indeed I never remember a longer night. Then came the news that the Boers had drawn off, leaving Pretoria unmolested, after which we went to bed feeling as flat as ditch water.

However, all these operations were postponed for two years, for the reason that so many British troops were pouring into South Africa in connection with the Zulu War that the Boers came to the conclusion that the time was not opportune to rebel. With *their* usual good sense they waited till, with *our* usual folly, we had shipped almost all the troops back to England and Sir Garnet Wolseley had sent the last cavalry regiment out of the country, and allowed (or perhaps it was Lanyon who allowed it) three hundred volunteers, nearly every man of whom was a loyalist, to be recruited there for service in the Basuto War. Then their chance came, one of which they made the most. Then, too, the Pretoria Horse, under a slightly altered name, had its full share of fighting, losing, I think, about a quarter of its number in killed and wounded. But, alas! at that time I was no longer there to command a squadron. I was on the Natal side of the Berg, listening to the guns thundering at Ingogo and Majuba.

Sir Bartle Frere, after interviews with the Boer leaders in their camp, reached Pretoria in the middle of April 1879, and remained there a fortnight as Colonel Lanyon's guest at Government House. I remember that I commanded the guard of honour which met



him in the veld and escorted him into the town, a duty which gave rise to a good story that I will tell at my own expense.

By this time the Pretoria Horse was a very smart body of mounted men divided into two squadrons. I regret to say, however, that although I was, I believe, efficient enough in other respects, owing to a lack of military training I was not well acquainted with the ceremonial words of command. When the High Commissioner appeared I ordered the corps to present arms, which they did in fine style. But arms cannot always be kept at the 'present,' and in due course it became necessary that they should be returned to their original position. Then arose my difficulty. I had either neglected to provide myself with or had forgotten the exact words that should be used. Yet the occasion was urgent : something had to be done. So I shouted in stentorian tones—or so at least my military friends used to swear afterwards when they wanted to chaff me, though to this hour I do not believe them—'Put 'em back again !' Well, it served. The Pretoria Horse grinned and the arms went back.

I saw Sir Bartle a good many times while he was in Pretoria, being brought in touch with him not only as an official but because he and my mother had been friends when they were young together in India. He was a tall, refined-looking man of about sixty-five, who always seemed to me to be employed in collecting first-hand information, questioning everyone whom he met on the chance of extracting something of value. I think that occasionally the Colonial officials and others rather resented his continual cross-examination. Indeed there is a trace of this in a report that he wrote to the Colonial Office as to Shepstone's character, dated February 3, 1879, in which document he com-

plained that he could not get as much out of Sir Theophilus as he would have wished. Now knowing my Chief as well as I did, my conclusion is that he did not altogether like being pumped, especially as he was not sure what use would be made of the information or if it would be correctly assimilated. Shepstone was always open enough with those whom he thoroughly knew and trusted, but these, I admit, were not very many in number. Sir Bartle describes him as 'a singular type of an Africander Talleyrand, shrewd, observant, silent, self-contained, immobile.' So he may have appeared to him, but I doubt whether he ever really understood the man or with what keys to unlock his heart.

In short, I imagine that when he was in Frere's company Shepstone always remained more or less on the defensive. Whatever may be the truth of this matter, Sir Bartle makes one undoubted mistake in the paper from which I have quoted. He says that Shepstone had no sort of sympathy with the Boers. This was not the case, as I know from many talks with him. He was full of sympathy for the Boers, and understood them as few men did. Moreover he appreciated all their good points, and most of them admired and were attached to him personally. Had this not been so he could never have annexed the Transvaal with such comparative ease. Moreover it should be remembered that all the acute troubles with the Boers arose after his departure from that country.

In my opinion, if I may venture to give it, Sir Bartle Frere was a great administrator and *almost* a great man. But I do not think he was suited to the position in which he found himself. Had Lord Carnarvon been a better judge of men and of character, he would not have appointed Frere to the High

Commissionership of South Africa. Frere imported into South Africa the methods of the great Indian administrators, and attempted to apply to peoples as far apart in all essentials of habit and of character as is the North Pole from the Tropics the policy that he had learned in the training and traditions of the East.

Had he been a younger man he might have adapted himself, and without altering his principles, which were just and good, changed the manner of their application. But age had already overtaken him when he landed at the Cape. He looked upon the Zulus as though they had been some Indian clan whom he, the Satrap, had only to lift his hand to sweep away in the interests of the mighty and remote Dominion which he served. He overlooked the wide divergence of the circumstances of the two lands and of the complications introduced by the existence in South Africa of two white peoples—the English and the Dutch—hereditary foes, who only awaited the removal of a common danger to spring at each other's throats. I do not believe that he ever grasped the problem in its entirety as, for instance, Shepstone did. He saw the Zulu war cloud looming on the frontier of Natal and determined to burst it even if it should rain blood. But he did not see that by this act of his, which, after all, might perhaps have been postponed, he was ensuring the rebellion of the Transvaal Dutch. His Indian traditions came into and dominated his mind. Yonder was a savage people who threatened the rights of the Crown and the safety of its subjects. Let them be destroyed! *Fiat justitia ruat cælum!*

Even at this distance of time it is difficult to speak of the treatment meted out to this most upright public servant and distinguished man, who, be it remembered, had only accepted his office at the urgent prayer

of the British Government, without using words of burning indignation. By the Liberals he was of course attacked, since his action gave them a convenient stick wherewith to beat the Government. This was to be expected. What was not to be expected was the lack of, or rather the half-hearted nature of the support which he received from his official superiors. About this time Lord Carnarvon resigned the Colonial Secretaryship owing to some difference of opinion between himself and his colleagues on other matters, which, in view of the state of South African affairs, many people will think he might have overlooked, and Sir Michael Hicks Beach filled his place.

The next step in the persecution of Sir Bartle Frere was to attack him through his pocket, as Shepstone was afterwards attacked in the same way. A certain special allowance of £2000 a year, which he had made one of the conditions of his acceptance of office, was publicly withdrawn from him. This was done by Lord Kimberley, the Liberal Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1880, and as even then Frere would not allow himself to be goaded into resignation over a money matter, a few months later the sacrifice was completed. He was recalled with ignominy, no other word seems to meet the case. He retired to England to die, as thought many of his friends, of a broken heart. Thus did Britain reward her faithful servant whose greatest crime was an error of judgment, if indeed he really erred, a matter that may well be argued. Well, he took with him the love and respect of every loyal man in South Africa, and when all these squalid party turmoils are forgotten, his name will shine on serene and untarnished in the sky of history.

To return to my personal reminiscences of this

great Governor. During the year 1877, in an unguarded moment I wrote an article descriptive of my visit to Secocoeni, which was published in an English magazine. In the course of this article I gave an accurate and lively account of the *ménage* of an ordinary Transvaal Boer, in the course of which I was so foolish as to say that the ladies were, for the most part, plain and stout. I do not think that I signed the paper, but from internal evidence it was traced back to me, and, needless to say, translated into the Dutch journals of the Cape Colony. Then a great hubbub arose, and ultimately, two years later, the matter came to the ears of Sir Bartle Frere.

He sent for me and very rightly reproached me for my indiscretion. In defence I replied that I had written no word that was not the strict and absolute truth.

‘Haggard,’ he said in his suave voice, ‘do you not know that there are occasions on which the truth is the last thing that should be uttered? I beg you in future to keep it to yourself.’

I bethought me of Talleyrand’s saying that language was given us to conceal our thoughts, but did not, I think, attempt to cap the argument by its quotation. In fact, his censure was well deserved. As St. Paul teaches us, all things may be lawful, but all things are not expedient, and at this juncture it was certainly inexpedient to make little jokes about the uncountable fleas in Boer bedsteads.

Another noted man who visited us was Mr. Anthony Trollope, who rushed through South Africa in a post-cart, and, as a result, published his impressions of that country. My first introduction to him was amusing. I had been sent away on some mission, I think it was to Rustenberg, and returned to Government House late one night. On going into the room

where I was then sleeping I began to search for matches, and was surprised to hear a gruff voice, proceeding from my bed, asking who the deuce I was. I gave my name and asked who the deuce the speaker might be.

‘Anthony Trollope,’ replied the gruff voice, ‘Anthony Trollope.’

Mr. Trollope was a man who concealed a kind heart under a somewhat rough manner, such as does not add to the comfort of colonial travelling.

I think that my most pleasant recollections of the Transvaal are those connected with my journeys on circuit in company with Judge Kotzé. Generally we travelled in an ox-waggon from town to town, and employed our leisure as we went in shooting, for at that time parts of the Transvaal veld were still black with game. Then at night we would sit by our camp fire eating the dinner which I always cooked—for I was very expert at the culinary art—or, if it were wet and cold, in our waggon, where we read Shakespeare to each other till it was time to go to bed.

One such night I remember well; it was on the high veld somewhere in the neighbourhood of Lake Chrissie, where the duck-shooting was magnificent. We read ‘Romeo and Juliet’ and went to sleep in due course. At dawn I poked my head between the curtains of the waggon, and in the dense mist that rolled around us saw a great herd of blesbuck feeding all about the waggon. I woke the Judge, and reaching down our rifles, we opened fire. He missed his blesbuck but I killed two at one shot, a thing I had never done before. Truth compels me to add that the Judge claimed one of them, but on that point I was unable to accept his learned decision.

On one of these journeys I nearly came to a bad

end. On a certain morning before breakfast I wounded a bull wildebeest, breaking one of its hind hocks, and mounting a famous hunting horse that I had, named Moresco, started to ride it down. But that wildebeest would not be ridden down, at least for a very long while. Being thin, notwithstanding its injury it went like the wind, and finally led me into a vast company of its fellows: I think there must have been three or four hundred of them. When once he began to gallop, game, Moresco was a horse that could not be held; the only thing to do was to let him have his head. Into that herd he plunged, keeping his eye fixed upon the wounded beast, which in the end he cut out from among them.

On we went again and got into a great patch of ant-bear holes. Some he dodged, some he jumped, but at length went up to his chest in one of them, throwing me on to his neck. Recovering himself with marvellous activity, he literally jerked me back into the saddle with a toss of his head, and we proceeded on our wild career. The end of it was that at last the bull was ridden to a standstill, but I could not pull up Moresco to get a shot at it. He went at the beast as though he were going to eat it. The bull charged us, and Moresco only avoided disaster by sitting down on his tail. As the beast passed underneath his head I held out my rifle with one hand and pulled the trigger; the bullet went through its heart and it dropped like a stone. Then I tied my handkerchief to its horn in order to scare away the aasvogel, and rode off to find the camp in order to get assistance.

All that day I rode, but I never found the camp on those vast, rolling plains. Once towards sunset I thought that I saw the white caps of the waggons five or six miles away. I rode to them to discover

that they were but white stones. A tremendous thunderstorm came on and wetted me to the skin. In the gloom the horse put his foot upon a rolling stone and gave me a terrible fall that bruised and nearly knocked the senses out of me.

After lying a while I recovered. Mounting again, I remembered that when I left the waggons the rising sun had struck me in the face. So I rode on towards the west until utter darkness overtook me. Then I dismounted, slipped the horse's reins over my arm, and, lying down on the fire-swept veld, placed the saddle-cloth over me to try to protect myself against the cold, which at that season of the year was very bitter on this high land. Wet through, exhausted, shaken, and starved as I was—for I had eaten nothing since the previous night—my position was what might be called precarious. Game trekked past me ; I could see their outlines by the light of such stars as there were. Then hyenas came and howled about me. I had three cartridges left, and fired two of them in the direction of the howls. By an afterthought I discharged the third straight up into the air. Then I lay down and sank into a kind of torpor, from which I was aroused by the sound of distant shouts. I answered them, and the shouts grew nearer, till at length out of the darkness emerged my Zulu servant, Mazooku.

It seemed that this last shot had saved me, for really I do not know what would have happened if I had lain all night in that wet and frost, or if I should ever have found strength to get on my horse again in the morning. Mazooku and other natives had been searching for me for hours, till at length all abandoned the quest except Mazooku, who said that he would go on. So he wandered about over the veld till at length his keen eyes caught sight of the flash from my rifle—he



Boers after our defeat at Majuba, or at any rate to those of them who would not take service under the Dutch Republic, as I for one could never have consented to do.

I find among my papers the letter accepting my resignation. It is as follows :

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE,  
PRETORIA: *May 31, 1879.*

SIR,—I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 29th inst. tendering the resignation of your office as Master and Registrar of the High Court, and to inform you by direction of His Excellency that he regrets that the Government should lose the services of an officer who has performed difficult duties so satisfactorily.

I have the honour, sir, to be

Your obedient Servant,

M. OSBORN,

Colonial Secretary.

I find also the following letter from Mr. Kotzé, the Chief Justice.

PRETORIA, TRANSVAAL: *May 24, 1879.*

MY DEAR HAGGARD,—Before you leave Pretoria I desire to record my regret at losing your services as Master and Registrar of the High Court of this territory.

For two years you have discharged the duties of this office with the greatest ability and satisfaction, and I have every reason to believe that you carry with you the good wishes of all who have known you here. Although I regret that you thought fit to resign your post, I think you have not acted indiscreetly in so doing. The salary (£400) attached to the office of Registrar and Master is only really equivalent to £200 in England or the Cape Colony, and although there exists the possibility of an increase thereof, such possibility is very remote.

The Civil Service in the Transvaal offers no inducement for young men of ambition or ability, and hence farming if

properly conducted affords a far better prospect to those willing and able to work.

Wishing you every success in your future undertaking,

Believe me,

Very faithfully yours,

J. G. KOTZÉ.

Here, while I am speaking of Kotzé, an able judge and an upright man, who ultimately did take service under the Boers and met with no good treatment either from them or subsequently from the British Government, I will record a curious instance of his memory.

About twenty years later he came to England and stayed with me at Ditchingham. On his arrival I took him to the cloak-room to hang up his overcoat. On the next peg was an old frieze ulster of mine which had survived from my early life—and, I may add, still survives, for to this day I sometimes wear it.

‘Why, Haggard,’ he said, ‘that is the coat you used to wear when we went on circuit together after the Annexation.’

It is curious that a man should remember a garment after so many stormy years, especially so as he only saw it hanging on a hook. Indeed such an incident makes one wonder whether we ever really forget anything.

So my life at Pretoria came to an end. Cochrane and I rode away one morning to a Boer stead somewhere in the neighbourhood of where Johannesburg now stands, and bought and paid for our ostriches. I think that Cochrane must have driven them down to Hilldrop, our new home near Newcastle in Natal, for I have no recollection of assisting in the business. Nor do I remember ever visiting Hilldrop until I came thither eighteen months or more later with my wife.

From that day to this I have never seen Pretoria

or the Transvaal, nor do I wish to see them. All is changed there, and I should find nothing but graves. I prefer to remember them as they were when I was young.

But of Natal I was destined to see a good deal more, as I hope to tell in the next chapter, which will deal with my life there at the time of the Boer rebellion.

## CHAPTER VII

### MARRIAGE

Death of Prince Imperial—Justin Sheil, early friend of H. R. H.—Thinks of becoming Trappist monk—H. R. H. tries to dissuade him—Sheil takes simple vows—H. R. H. visits him—Takes final vows as Brother Basil—Death of Father Basil, who had become Sub-Prior—H. R. H. returns home to Bradenham—Engaged to be married—Married August 11, 1880—Jack Osborn, son of Sir Melmoth—H. R. H. becomes his guardian—Goes to school in England—Returns to South Africa and dies—Sir Melmoth Osborn's gratitude to H. R. H. and his father—He becomes British Resident in Zululand—Origin of character of Alston in 'The Witch's Head'—Letters from Judge Kotzé.

ONE of the last things that happened before I left South Africa was the slaying of the Prince Imperial by a Zulu outpost. Well can I remember the thrill of horror, and, I may add, of shame, that this news sent through all the land. Yet it has always seemed to me that the most of the blame should have fallen, not upon the unfortunate officer and his companions who were with the Prince, but on whoever allowed him to go out upon picket duty of so peculiarly dangerous a nature. The incident itself is easily explained. Nothing is more terrible than a sudden rush of savages on a little party that does not suspect their presence, especially when the attacking force may perhaps be numbered by hundreds. The Englishmen concerned lost their heads, that was all. It was a case of *saute qui peut*. Doubtless until it was too late they thought the Prince was with them. Well, he died as anyone might be proud to die, and, as it seems probable, by his

death changed the history of Europe, or at any rate the destiny of France, for doubtless, had he lived, his chance of succeeding to the imperial throne was excellent. Again, one wonders whether such things happen by hazard, or if it were the hand of Fate that threw those assegais.

After an absence of four eventful years I arrived in England when I was a little over twenty-three, an age at which many young fellows nowadays seem to be, and indeed often are, but boys. In one thing I was fortunate: I found all belonging to me alive and for the most part well. With my two greatest friends of the Scoones' period of my life, however, Arthur L. and Justin Sheil, it was otherwise. The former was dead; he was a good fellow, and I hope that some day and somewhere we may meet again. Meanwhile God rest him!

My recollection is that Arthur L.'s illness began in a form of religious mania. If so, my other great friend, Justin Sheil, also passed into the shadow, or the glory, of religion. Before proceeding further with my story, here I will tell his, although the end of it may cause me to anticipate. This I do not only because he was, or rather is, dear to me, although he has long been dead—for I may truly say that the change of death has in no instance altered my affections, unless it be in the manner of increasing them—but for two added reasons.

Of these the first is that his case is the most perfect instance of what I may call the monastic mind that I have encountered. The second is that I presume that the iron rules of the Trappist monks, save in questions strictly connected with the advantage of their Order, allow of the preservation of no human memorials of those who have passed on. In their graveyard at

Mount St. Bernard's Abbey I saw certain low mounds and, at the head of these, little nameless wooden crosses, all that remained of the brethren who had been called away. Therefore I, a sinner, would make my humble offering to the *Manes* of a good man and say a few words that I trust may help to preserve his memory among those who come after us.

As it chanced, certain letters that Sheil, or Brother Basil, as he came to be called in religion, wrote to me have survived, although I dare say that others are lost. The first of these evidently was written in answer to one of mine sent to him after my return to England in 1879. It is dated Mount St. Bernard's Abbey, Leicester, October 21st.

After congratulating me on my safe return to England, it says :

I suppose that you have not seen Walsh or the unfortunate Norris since you came, or they would probably have told you of my strange experiment here ; I am thinking of becoming a monk of the Cistercian Order commonly called Trappists. If you have not heard it before I suppose you, who knew me better than most people, will be most surprised. When I first came here I intended writing to you, but I had quite forgotten your address, and when I got it from my brother in New Zealand I thought I might as well wait till I had made up my mind whether to stop here or not. I may say that I am still uncertain as to that ; the life is hardish, and I am softish, but I am afraid of dropping back into my old ways if I leave, so I am hovering. . . .

The next letter, dated October 26th, is evidently written in answer to one from myself, of the contents of which I have no recollection. It is clear, however, from the context, that I attempted to dissuade Sheil from the career which he had chosen in language that must have seemed to him almost impertinent. In fact to a strict Roman Catholic doubtless it was impertinent.

In youth most of us are intolerant, and I was no exception to the rule. As we get on in life all such things vanish. Personally to-day I am not prepared to quarrel with any religion worthy of the name, unless it be that of Mahomet in certain of its aspects. I have learned that they all spring from the same light, though the world being, as it were, cut crystal, that light flows from its facets in different-coloured rays. Here is the letter :

When I got, yesterday, your mysterious-looking letter labelled ' Private ' and with an awful black seal, I wondered what dark secrets it was going to unfold. When I had read it I think that I should have been inclined to laugh if I had not been sorry that you should be the victim of such dull and stale delusions with regard to monks and the motives that induce a man to become one. You have used hard words, and you will let me add that I think it unworthy of a man of your mental quality to live year after year confronted by the Catholic Church (*pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova*) and be content to derive all your knowledge of it from some vulgar Protestant pamphlet, and all your ideas of its institutions and ways from what I suppose you were told in the nursery. You go to the originals to discover what Hegel or Comte really teach, and you are eager enough to find out all about Darwinism, etc., but as for Catholics, you not only don't inquire from them what they really teach but you assume to lecture them. Having relieved my mind so far, I can assure you your letter was far from giving me offence ; on the contrary ; I know very well you are not singular in your views, and that many who call themselves my friends think the same, but you are the only one who has taken sufficient interest in the matter to tell me so, and therefore I thank you. I don't intend to defend the monastic state. It has existed since the beginning of the fourth century, has been continuously attacked, and yet it has flourished ; all Catholics look and have looked on it as a higher and more perfect state, and therefore I will assume it ; it has been often and eloquently defended, and moreover it could not be done in a letter. However, the fact that it is

good in itself is not at all a conclusive reason why I should embrace it ; and if you had tried to dissuade me from it on the score that I had made myself unfit and unworthy for it I should have had very little to answer. I did not come here in consequence of any trouble of the kind you allude to, nor any other, nor in a fit of disgust. When I said I was afraid if I left of dropping into my old ways, I meant the idle, aimless, useless life I led when you knew me and some time after : my only object was pleasure and happiness, and I was unscrupulous in trying to get them. However, about six months previous to coming here I had made a great change and lived more or less as a Catholic should : I had got out of Chancery and paid my debts and begun reading for the Bar in a Conveyancer's rooms, and it was under these circumstances that I came here, and it is what I shall resume if I leave. I prefer London and Paris to Africa how fair soever be its skies, and the Park to the Sahara. You see my prospects in the world are not so darkened as you think ; nevertheless they do not wear a very fascinating smile to my eyes. For, take everything at its best and assume that I should succeed in everything : after many years' drudging I should be a successful barrister, and perhaps end by becoming a judge if I was very lucky. What good should I have done my fellow-men by that ? Don't you know that when a man in practice dies, a hundred rejoice, thinking that they will get some of his work, for one who is sorry ? Do you feel grateful to a lawyer worn out with briefs, as if he were a public benefactor in consenting to work in the world instead of retiring to some rural or suburban retreat ? Judging by the ordinary run of man, in fifty years I should be a crabbed bachelor, or still worse a tormented and disappointed married man—not much better than your 'soured monk.' Besides, I believe in the immortality of the soul, and in fact it was the great 'hereafter' which weighed on my mind and prevented my being content with prospects which sound well enough to most people. And if I made myself my own and only centre in this life, why should I at the hour of death suddenly change and love my Creator ; and if I did not what chance should I have of enjoying Him ? You will say that it is possible to love God in the world ; and so it is : the thing I am trying to



decide is where it will be easiest for *me* to do so. It may be more heroic to remain and fight your battles bravely, but permit me, where the consequences of defeat are so hideous, who really am in such matters nothing but a coward, who have been so often overcome, at least to think of flight.

I repeat I have decided nothing ; the Church insists upon people being tried for two years at least before taking simple vows (*i.e.* that can be dissolved by the superiors if they find you unfit), and five years before taking solemn vows, which can only be dissolved by the Pope. Compare this caution with the approved facility with which a man may bind himself for long periods as a soldier or for life in marriage ! I may eventually regret it ; but what may not be regretted, and how many things have most men done which they do regret ! Surely you should not omit to do a good thing because you *may* regret it. I might say a good deal more, but have no time. I once more thank you for writing as you did, with your old warmth and not without your old eloquence. Finally, if you like to come here, if you have the time, the inclination and the opportunity, I am sure the Abbot would be very glad to accommodate you for any time under *three months* (that is the rule) in the guest-house. I warn you however that the *fare* is *very* frugal, and twenty-four hours might exhaust your patience.

Very sincerely yours,

J. SHEIL.

It seems to me that, in the above letter, dear Sheil goes far towards justifying the attack that I had evidently made upon his position. 'Permit me . . . at least to think of flight.' He admits that he had run away from the world and its temptations because of 'the hideous consequences of defeat,' *i.e.* the loss of his soul. His idea was that by shutting himself up in an iron box he would avoid sin and its 'hideous consequences.' But I wonder now, as I wondered then, whether, supposing the capitulation to the natural impulses of the body to be cardinal sin, such sin is really avoided by the method of the iron box ? True,

they cannot be gratified, for, if you wish to drink, there is no whisky ; if you wish to make love, there is no woman, and so forth. Yet in that case does not the wish assume the proportions of the accomplished deed ? A noted passage in the New Testament seems to suggest that this may be so ; also incidents in the lives of the saints occur to one, though we are told only of those in which they triumphed. Of course *if*, by the aid of terrible abstinence or of prayer, every human desire and frailty can be banished and the mind can become, so to speak, sterilised of all harmful thoughts, then a condition of absolute though negative virtue will be attained. Whether the virtue thus gained—if it be possible to gain it while even sleep and its dreams remain—is of a truer and higher quality than that proportion of goodness which can be won, that more soiled garment which must be worn by him who remains in the world and bears the heat and burden of its day ; often falling, but struggling to his feet again ; sinning, and lamenting his sins ; striving to do better, yet frequently in vain ; living the full life, bringing others into that life and, to the best of his ability, bearing their burdens ; doing here a good and there, perhaps, a harm ; and at length, filled with experience, departing penitent and mercy-seeking to whatever future career may await him—is not for me to say. Probably the question must be answered in accordance with the temperament and gifts of the questioner. For me it is too hard. However, it is more or less dealt with on one side in some of Sheil's remaining epistles.

The next of these is dated nearly a year later than that which I have quoted :

MOUNT ST. BERNARD'S ABBEY : *August 3, 1880.*

I thank you for thinking of writing to tell me of your marrying ; you were right in thinking it would interest me.

If joy and prosperity came by my wishing you would certainly have your fill in all your life to come. I am glad you are marrying, as I think it much better for a man than knocking about by himself. I suppose you had some photos struck on this auspicious occasion ; if so, may I suggest that the one I have of you was youthful when you gave it, I think six years ago, and that I should very much like to have another, and, if it is not asking too much, one of Miss Margitson (I hope that is rightly spelt, but your writing is more shocking than ever) ? I am not surprised at your anxiety to get back to South Africa and your weariness of England ; I suppose our brightest sky is only a fog to you.

As for myself, I took the simple vows a short time since ; of course I cannot consider myself absolutely fixed till the solemn vows, but I hope I am. I don't see how anyone can avoid having an intellectual if not a practical contempt for this life if he believes in eternity. I was reading the other day that if a man had been born at the beginning of the world and shed one tear every thousand years, he would now have shed six tears ; yet the time will most infallibly come when any and every one will be able to say that at that rate he would have filled the ocean with tears. This seems to me striking and true. The thing is that the happiness or misery of all this future (there is only one alternative) depends on what you love in this life ; you *must* love the Invisible. The beauty of the life we lead here is that it makes this comparatively easy.

I should have liked to give you a small token of my feeling for you, but, as I suppose you know, a man who takes the vows ceases to be the owner of any moneys or of anything else ; (of course if I was not admitted to solemn vows I should recover what I have given). I hope you will accept my good will. Have you seen Walsh and Fuller and de Roebeck ? Remember me to them, and also particularly to Mr. Norris. Good-bye. I hope you will not forget Auld lang syne (nor the photograph). I should like to have been at your wedding and seen your bride.

Very affectionately yours,

BROTHER BASIL.

In due course I married, but before alluding to that matter I will continue and finish the story of Brother Basil. At the end of our honeymoon my wife and I made a pilgrimage to Mount St. Bernard's Abbey. This I did both because I wished to see him and because in my vanity I thought that if we could come face to face I might be able by my personal influence to induce him to return to the world. I confess that I felt afraid, needlessly afraid as it proved, of facing these stern and silent monks on an errand which they would know well was inimical to them. Still I determined on the attempt.

There were some difficulties about the journey—I forget their exact nature—but at length we arrived without being expected. I stated my object and, somewhat to my surprise, was admitted with my wife. I was almost sure that a young woman would not be allowed to pass those portals. On the contrary we were most courteously received by an extremely charming sub-prior, a thorough man of the world and a gentleman who was able to talk to us of many lands and events. He said that Brother Basil should be sent for, and after a while I heard heavy wooden shoes—I think they were wooden—clumping down a passage ; the door opened and there appeared the Sheil from whom I had parted some six years before. He was clad in a coarse robe ; his head was tonsured, or such is my recollection ; his face was pale, and it seemed to me as though the work in that scorching weather in the hot harvest field from which he had been summoned had exhausted him. At first he could hardly speak, which was not wonderful seeing the unexpected nature of the occasion and the rule of silence in which he lived. His delight at our visit seemed very great. After some talk, greatly daring, I asked if I might see him alone.

To my astonishment the request was granted at once. We went out, I think into a graveyard—or it may have been the garden, though certainly I saw a graveyard with its nameless little wooden crosses—leaving my wife with the sub-prior.

Then came the struggle. I argued high and low, I implored, and was utterly worsted. I could not move him one inch; my arguments he answered, my beseeching he put aside with the most sweet and tender gratitude.

‘Many have scolded and lectured me,’ he said; ‘you are the first who ever came here to try to snatch me from what you believe to be an intolerable fate.’

That was the substance of his words, mingled with thanks and blessings.

We returned, and my wife and I were shown something of their farm and of the school where the monks taught children; also all their terrible mode of life was exposed to us: the dormitories, the bare board on which they took their scanty vegetable fare, the stern rules of their Order—nothing was kept back. I remember that I was filled with admiration, although I remained in moral rebellion against this terrific system which turned men into dumb creatures and fed their bodies with the bread and water of affliction for the benefit of their souls. I was shown a prize bull they had which was in the charge of a monk who had been a Yorkshire yeoman. A sign was made to him: he was allowed to speak to me, about the bull but nothing else. How the words poured from those silent lips, jumbled, incoherent at first, then growing clearer as the habit of speech returned to him. The broad Yorkshire accent and the familiar terms of farm life sounded bizarre in those surroundings as he sang the praises of his bull.

Another sign and he was silent. We returned and were served with a bountiful meal and most hospitably attended. Then came the farewell. I shook Sheil's hand and looked into his patient eyes. The door clanged to behind us. It was our last meeting in the world.

A letter written by him a few days later shows something of the state of mind excited in him by our visit. It is dated September 8, 1880, over thirty-one years ago.

I had intended asking you about the photographs you promised, but duly forgot them; I hope *you* will not do so. There were other things too which I had intended saying, but I suppose the flurry of first meeting obfuscated my memory. It takes time to get into one's old swing, and I generally feel awkward at first meeting with people I have known well after a long absence; there are so many things to say, so many memories, that one does not know where to begin, and flies from one thing to another in a most unsatisfactory way. What made it worse in our case was that we were both in new circumstances, and that you had not become reconciled to mine. I feel ashamed at all the trouble and expense you have been at to come and see me; I wish I could show my gratitude better than by words, but it is hard to see in what I could be of use to you; if however there is ever anything I could do, and you let me know, I will. Perhaps when you come back again, if you have not had enough of it, if you will come and see me we will arrange things much better.

I wish you and your wife all happiness; I think I said it was a poor affection which only wished for its object happiness for fifty years or so of this life; and what I wish is that we may all go home together and be together always. Remember me to Walsh and to poor Norris.

I remain, affectionately yours,  
BROTHER BASIL.

Where would a letter find you in Africa?

Something less than two years have gone by and I find another letter in answer to one of mine written on my second return from South Africa owing to events which I hope to describe in due course. It is dated Mount St. Bernard's Abbey, June 4, 1882.

I was glad to get a letter from you of the old length if in a new vein. I am sorry you have been obliged to leave Africa, though I confess I think your new profession [that of the Bar. —H. R. H.] more in your line than developing ostrich plumes. I suppose at the Cape there is only a step between law and politics. I wish you all success and prosperity. Many thanks for your interest in me ; I still continue content in my position, and I look forward to making my final vows about this time next year. I am satisfied that this is a high vocation and that I personally am called to it. I should like to know how you account for the fact that I, being what I am, not given to virtue nor enthusiasm, should have conceived the idea of coming to such a place, that I should have executed it, not without sacrifice, that I should have persevered in it, and that now after four years' trial I should have no greater hope than to pass the rest of my life here. It is a marvel even to myself ; there is but one explanation—the incomprehensible mercy of God. You may prefer the vocation of St. Paul to that of St. John Baptist, but it is safer to recommend both. Anyhow it is more modest not to condemn a way of life which has been followed by so many, so great, so holy men now these fourteen centuries. There is no country that owes more to St. Benedict and his rule than England. No one that I am aware of says that it is necessary for everyone to become a monk in order to be saved ; but some are called, and if they are faithful they will have an easier and better salvation. Everyone who believes the true faith and keeps the commandments is safe. All this is the penny Catechism (I wish you would buy one), for as yet my theological science extends little further.

One reason why people have a difficulty in understanding such a life as ours is that they forget original sin. They say,

God created the good things of life in order to be used, etc. But we are fallen and corrupt, and things no longer have the effect upon us that God intended in creating them ; they were to have raised by their use our minds and hearts to God, and of course it would have been absurd for the unfallen Adam to practise asceticism. But now unfortunately our natures drag us down, and usually the more a man enjoys good things in life the less he thinks of God ; and I suppose this is why the rich and riches are so much denounced in the Gospel. Anyhow no one ever applied himself seriously to the love of his Creator without feeling the necessity of separating himself more and more from comfort. Even in a monastery it requires a constant effort to set our affections on the things that are above and not to mind things that are on earth, to attend to the invisible which does not pass away. In fact it cannot be done perfectly till we can say that the world is crucified to us and we to the world, and that with Christ we are nailed to the Cross. (Of course only the Saints ever really do this. 'Nullus amor sine dolore.') You are wrong in saying that it is hard to come face to face with God's will in this world, because God is not far from every one of us. If any man wants wisdom let him ask of Him Who giveth to all abundantly, and he shall receive it. The day after getting your letter I was looking over the life of my patron St. Justin, it being the eve of his feast ; he was a heathen, but possessed by a passion for truth. He spent his youth wandering from one school of philosophy to another, dissatisfied with them all, till one day he met on the seashore an old man who began telling him of the wisdom of the prophets and of Christ, and after such speaking concluded by saying, 'As for thyself, above all things, pray that the gates of life may be open to you ; for these are not things to be discerned, unless God and Christ grant to a man knowledge of them.' I believe that anyone who really desires to know the Truth, and who is resolved to embrace it at all costs, and who prays for light, will come to it and will then first understand what it is to 'rejoice in hope.'

I am sorry you gave me no news of Norris or Walsh ; I never hear of them except from you. One effect of leading an uneventful life is that the past stands out clearly,



unobscured by subsequent impressions. My compliments to your wife and Mr. Haggard.

Very sincerely yours,

BROTHER BASIL.

When your book comes out [Brother B. here alludes to 'Cetewayo and his White Neighbours'] I will make one of my sisters send it if it is not too long ; I have not much time for reading, especially in summer.

It will be observed from the tenor of this letter that the writer is already almost lost in the monastic atmosphere. He still retains his personal friendship for myself and is interested in one or two of our old associates, but all his earnest thought is given to his soul and its salvation. The world is slipping away from him. He even fears to read my forthcoming history lest it should be 'too long' and take his time from his devotions and self-imposed physical labours, which could have been so much better done by any working man.

Eight years go by and there comes another note, also apparently in answer to one from myself. It is dated September 3, 1890.

Your good memory is very kind, and now that you have become so famous, highly flattering. I suppose in your judgment our regime ought to have improved me off the face of the globe ; however here I am, by no means dead, and not even, I am sorry to say, in the sense of Colossians iii. 3 ['For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.'—H. R. H.]. I should be delighted to see you again if you are able to come here ; I have often wished to hear of our mutual friends. Of you, of course, I have heard, and perused somewhat. It seems quite a short time since you were here ; it is startling to find that we are ten years older. . . . I hope Mrs. R. H. not only lives but is well and happy. Please give her my kind regards.

Always your sincere friend,

BROTHER BASIL.

Both this letter and the one which remains are written in a somewhat different handwriting to those already quoted. It is more careful and less natural.

The last letter, dated September 10, 1891, deals with the death of my son, of which I had written to Brother Basil. I think, too, that I had sent him a copy of 'Allan Quatermain,' which was dedicated to the boy and, after his death, contained his portrait. Here is the portion of the letter that is essential.

You wrote to me when you came back from Africa, so I have had your son in mind when I have thought of you. The idea of you as paterfamilias seemed very amusing. So now there is an end of hopes. Of course your loss is irreparable; even if you had another son he would not be the same. Judging from his picture he must have been a *very* nice fellow. I am afraid that in the reality of sorrow you have felt the 'great breast of Nature' rather too hard to give rest. What a curious irony that that introduction should have followed that dedication. [The quotation here and the subsequent remark referred to the Introduction to 'Allan Quatermain,' in which he laments the death of his only son.—H. R. H.]

Looking at matters from their point of view I don't regret much the death of children. They have been rightly baptised, and they are not old enough to stand in crying need of other sacraments. I wish my prospects were as bright as your son's. *Vae nobis quia peccavimus*. . . .

BROTHER BASIL.

I pass on to the end of the story, which the following letter tells.

MT. ST. BERNARD'S ABBEY; August 6, 1893.

DEAR SIR,—The notice in the papers was unfortunately too true in the case of good Fr. Basil. He died in Rome on May 11th.

For some years he had been suffering from abscesses in different parts of the body, which the doctors considered showed a tendency to consumption, and they strongly recommended a change of climate. Last autumn it was arranged

that he should go to Rome for a year or so. Unhappily instead of improving he became worse, though not seriously so, until the first week in May, when the spine seems to have become affected, and on the 8th he was seized with paralysis, and died, as I have said, on the 11th, the feast of the Ascension of Our Lord.

From accounts received, his death was most peaceful and happy, he being fully conscious and perfectly resigned to the Will of God.

When he left us he was Sub-Prior ; and after being in Rome for a short time he was appointed Procurator-General for the whole Order. His death has been a great loss to us here and to all the Members of the Reformed Cistercian body.

I am happy thus to testify to the high esteem in which he was held ; and very numerous have been the letters received, expressing deep regret at his death, and the highest regard for him.

With every good wish,

I remain, dear sir,

Yours very truly in Christ,

C. W. HIPWOOD,

Abb. O.C.R.

Thus ends the earthly story of my friend Justin Sheil, known in religion as Brother Basil, between whom and me, different as were our characters and our walks in life, there existed some curious affinity. As he himself remarks, it is strange that a man of his pleasure-loving nature and somewhat sardonic vein of humour should have become a Trappist monk and been well pleased with his choice. To use his own words, this is indeed a mystery, one of those mysteries which appear to suggest that the human heart is much wider than it seems. We see the point of an iceberg floating on the ocean and are apt to forget that hidden in its depths is a vast, unsuspected bulk. So it may be with the nature of man. We perceive its visible

portion ; we think we know it ; we sum it up and declare that its character is this or that. Nay, more, we declare it of our own natures wherewith we should be well acquainted. And yet deep in the ocean of being floats the real nature, unmeasured, unsuspected, till perhaps, in some cataclysm of the soul, not all but a new portion of it is revealed, and that which was familiar is submerged. Is every individuality in truth multiple ? Are reincarnationists right when they assert that only a part of it becomes active in this world at one time—a part that we think the whole ? Who can tell ?

It was a hard and dreadful life that he led, if measured by our standards, how hard only those who are familiar with the rules of the Trappists will rightly know. Yet even in these iron bonds his native ability asserted itself, for just as he died he rose to high office in the Order while still a young man, though now, after eighteen years of silence more complete even than that in which he dwelt, probably he is forgotten. Others pray where he prayed, think what he thought and fast as he fasted, till, worn out by privation and by the burning fire of spiritual ardour, they join him in his unrecorded grave. So it has ever been with spirits like his own. In Egypt I have seen the cells occupied by anchorites a thousand years before Christ was born. On Tabor, Mount of the Transfiguration, I have stood in the living tombs of the hermits who dreamed away their long years, generation after generation of them, and hollowed the rock of the holy mountain with their nightly tossings. In Tibet the lean and wasted claw of the immured, thrust through some hole to grasp the offering of food, advises the traveller that here, dead and yet breathing, dwells a holy man who thus seeks to propitiate the unanswering

gods. That which was, still is and shall be while the world endures ; not in one religion but in many.

I make no excuse for the telling of this true tale, because it seems to me to constitute a human document of great interest. It is not often that we have the opportunity of coming face to face with this kind of heart as it reveals itself in the foregoing letters. Besides, any whom it does not interest can leave it unread.

May my dear friend's prayer be fulfilled : may we meet again in some other phase of life and there learn the true reason of these matters ; if a common, erring man may hope to associate with a spirit so purified and—yes, so holy. Peace be with him ; but since I for one cannot believe that he and all mankind are the victims of a ghastly delusion, or are led forward by mocking marsh-fires of self-evolved aspirations to be lost in some bottomless gulf of death, I will *not* add—farewell.

To return to my own history. When I reached home everyone was very glad to see me, especially my mother, but my father did not welcome my reappearance with whole-hearted enthusiasm. He remarked with great candour that I should probably become ' a waif and a stray,' or possibly—my taste for writing being already known—' a miserable penny-a-liner.' I am sure I do not wonder at his irritation, which, were I in his place to-day, I should certainly share. He saw that I had thrown up my billet and he had no faith in the possibilities of African farming.

All of these things, and others, he told me in the course of a row which arose over the loss of a gigantic turtle which I had brought home from the Island of Ascension, where I had visited my brother John, who at that time was first-lieutenant of H.M.S. *Flora*. The Island of Ascension, by the way, where they catch

these turtles on the beach and store them in tanks, is a very interesting spot, for there one sees a part of the world in the making. On the top of a peak is a green area of soil that I presume owes its origin to the droppings of sea-birds. Below is bare rock. This area must have been formed within recent times, say during the last 500,000 years, and in another million or so of years doubtless it will have spread all over the island. The processes of nature are distinctly slow.

In some mysterious way my turtle got lost in the London Docks. Personally I thought the occurrence fortunate, for what would have been done with the creature if I had succeeded in conveying it safely to Bradenham Hall still alive and flapping, I cannot conceive. Imagine the local butcher confronted with a turtle; imagine the domestic cook and the quantities of soup that would have resulted, if it ever got so far as soup! I pointed all this out to my father, but he took another view. He wanted his turtle and said so, often, and, alas! it had vanished in the London Docks. Probably a steward sold it to a City Company on the sly. A sportive passenger on the ship made a rhyme on the matter. It began :

'Tis true, O my Father, from distant lands  
I've come, a bad penny, back on your hands ;  
But when once you have tasted this nice green fat,  
You won't care, O my Parent, one kipper for that.

The trouble was that he never did 'taste that nice green fat.'

However, things righted themselves by degrees, as somehow they generally do when one is young and not afraid to take chances. To begin with, not long after my arrival in England I did the wisest and best deed of my life and engaged myself to be married.

The young lady whom I met thirty-two years ago, and who is to-day, God be thanked, living, and strong enough to have won prizes in a croquet tournament last week, was named Louisa Margitson, the only surviving child of Major Margitson of the 19th Regiment and of Ditchingham House in this county, where we now live. The Margitsons were originally yeomen in the neighbourhood of North Walsham, crossed with Huguenot blood—we still hold their property, or some of it. They intermarried with the respected Norwich family of the name of Beckwith, and also with a descendant of Dr. Robert Hamilton of Lynn, a distinguished man in his day, who was a friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds. There still hangs in this house a portrait of Countess Margaret Georgiana Spencer and child, by Reynolds, which is said to have been given by him to Dr. Robert Hamilton, my wife's great-great-grandfather. On her mother's side she is also directly descended from the great Scottish family of Hamilton, thus having a double cross of that blood in her veins. Her parents died in her youth, leaving her the heiress to certain landed property which would have been valuable had real estate in Norfolk retained the worth which it had at the time of their death. As things are we do not get much out of it ; indeed I believe that directly and indirectly I must have expended nearly as much upon the properties as, up to the present, we have received during our tenure of them. For instance, fifty years ago the estate produced sufficient to support a family in something more than comfort. Now its net rentals, although it is totally unencumbered, about pay for the upkeep of the house and gardens. I mention these facts because I see it recorded in works of reference that I married an 'heiress,' which is an elastic term.

My dear wife was a schoolfellow of my sister Mary, and was staying with her at Bradenham when we met. After a short acquaintance we became engaged, and at first all went well enough ; subsequently, however, her guardians—for she was not yet of age—after consenting to her engagement, reconsidered the matter and wished her to break it off. I do not altogether blame them, since at the moment my prospects were not particularly brilliant. As it chanced, however, my wife, perhaps the most upright and straightforward woman whom I ever knew, was not one of a nature to play fast and loose in such matters. She declined, whereupon one of her guardians, who was a lawyer, made her a ward in Chancery. Well do I remember appearing before Vice-Chancellor Malins, a kindly old gentleman and man of the world, upon whose gouty toe I inadvertently trod when shaking hands with him. He soon sifted the matter out and approved of the engagement, making certain directions as to settlements, etc. The net result of the whole business was that, including the cost of the settlements, a very moderate estate was mulcted in law expenses of a sum of nearly £3000 !

In after days I and my wife's relations, with most of whom, by the way, I never had any difference at all, as they were no parties to these proceedings, became and remained the best of friends. So I wish to say no more of the matter except that I regret those moneys which went in quite useless law costs. The end of the business was that after about a year of these excursions and alarums we were duly married on August 11, 1880, I being twenty-four and my wife within a few months of twenty-one, and departed from this house to Norwich in a carriage drawn by four grey horses with postilions. This is interesting, as I believe it must have been one



of the last occasions upon which postilions were used for such a purpose in England, except of course in the case of royal personages. At any rate I have never seen or heard of them since in this connection, and how we came to have them I do not quite know. I can see them now in their gay dress and velvet caps touching up the grey steeds with their short whips. We made quite a sensation on our thirteen-mile journey to and through Norwich; but oh! were we not glad when it was all over.

In a letter recently found at Bradenham, headed Ditchingham House, Bungay, December 21, 1879, and addressed to my brother William, who was then attached to the British Embassy at Teheran, I find the following estimate of my future wife's character, and expression of my feelings towards her.

Next, my dear Will—*je vais me marier*—to such a brick of a girl, Louie Margitson. They are certain to have told you all about her in their letters from home, so I will only say that I love her sincerely, as I think she does me, and that, unless something untoward occurs to dash the cup from my lips, I think we have as good a prospect of happiness as most people. She is good and sensible and true-hearted, and every day I see her I love and respect her more. She is a woman who can be a man's friend as well as his lover, and whom I would trust as I would very few. She is willing to come to Africa, so we propose returning there shortly, *i.e.* as soon as we can get satisfactorily married. There is property concerned, and trustees, who, as I dare say you know, are gentry difficult to deal with. They want us to postpone the marriage till she comes of age next October, but we don't see the force of it in any way. I *want* to get married next April—whether I shall manage or not is another matter. . . .

Good-bye, old fellow. God bless you.

Your loving brother,

H. RIDER HAGGARD.

In fact, as I have said, we did not succeed in marrying until August 11, 1880.

The circumstance of my marriage gave me pause as to my plan of leading a farmer's life in South Africa, and as my father and family were very anxious that I should re-enter the Colonial Service, I made some attempt to do so. It is, however, one thing to give up a billet and quite another to get it back again. Had Sir Theophilus Shepstone or even Sir Owen Lanyon still been in power in the Transvaal, doubtless there would have been little difficulty. But a new Pharaoh had arisen in the shape of Sir Garnet Wolseley who knew not Joseph, and probably wished to keep any available patronage in his own hands. At any rate, on the matter being referred to him, he replied 'that arrangements are in contemplation which prevent your reinstatement in the office of Master of the High Court in the Transvaal.'

Those 'arrangements' were indeed a blessing in disguise, since, had I been reinstated, we should have had the pleasure, as I have shown, of going through the siege of Pretoria, and on the Retrocession I should have been dismissed from my office without compensation, as I believe happened to the gentleman who succeeded me. It was one of the peculiar cruelties of that act that Englishmen who had taken service under the British Government in the Transvaal were treated thus, since, of course, even if the opportunity had been given, they could scarcely transfer their allegiance from the Queen to a Boer Republic. But, after all, they suffered no worse things than scores of British subjects whose farms were looted, and who in practice were left to send in their bill to their new Dutch masters—with results that may be imagined.

When I went home in 1879 Mr. (or, as he afterwards

became, Sir Melmoth) Osborn entrusted me with the guardianship of his son Jack, a boy of about sixteen, whom he asked me to send to whatever school I might select in England. So it comes about that he wrote me a good many letters, a few of which survive and contain items of interest as to public affairs in Africa at this period.

Poor Jack Osborn after a course of education in England returned to South Africa and was appointed to some office in Zululand. There, a few years later, he died of abscess of the liver.

In a letter dated Pretoria, October 10, 1879, Osborn says:

I have your letter 23rd August in which you give account of your stewardship regarding Jack. Accept my sincere thanks for all you have done and the care you took of the boy, who I fear must have been a great bother to you. Your father's kind note to me I need not tell you how greatly I appreciate, and I will write to him by this mail. Jack wrote me several letters since his arrival in England. He is loud about all the kindness shown him by you and your people, your father especially, whom he seems to swear by. . . . Sir Garnet Wolseley is here. He would not take up his abode in Government House, but had a house hired for his occupation, and is now in Koch's new residence near Melville's, together with his staff. I have a very hard time of it just now, having to serve two masters who, between us, do not seem to pull together very well. Sir Garnet seems to disapprove entirely of Sir Bartle Frere's policy with Kaffirs and Boers. . . .

With regard to your returning to the Colonial Service your father is quite right, and I think you should return. The business between you and Cochrane could be easily arranged, although I dare say to you there seems a difficulty about it. If you start again fairly in any other colony but this you are sure to succeed, and I strongly advise you to do so—it would simply be following a pursuit for which you are eminently suited and abandoning one for which you are not. I think

I told you that I did the same thing some years ago : resigned my appointment in the Service and invested in a sugar estate, but soon found that trying to do that which I did not understand involved nothing but loss, and by advice of a friend I re-entered the Service, tho' in a low grade. Well, by steady perseverance and without one-half the advantages you have, here I am to-day. Perhaps you will say it is not much after all ; but if you had to encounter all the uphill work that fell to my lot of which you have no conception, and when you are a little older, you will be able to appreciate matters as I do.

I have but little news to send you this time. Two regiments are expected here in a few days I believe, so that we will have a lot of troops at hand to cope with the Amabull [a slang name for the Boers.—H. R. H.] or any other obstreperous bulls who might trouble us. Last evening I heard from Middelburg that the Boers there are very violent and the Landdrost Scoble was anticipating serious results. All these things happening so continually worry me a good deal, and I am heartily sick of it all. . . .

Ever your affectionate friend,

M. OSBORN.

The next letter is headed Zululand, April 14, 1880.

My post runner brought me your very welcome letter of 3 February yesterday. I was very glad to get it and to hear that all was well with you. Before proceeding to business matters I must offer you my sincere and hearty congratulations on the prospect of happiness before you. Depend upon it you are doing the right thing. A man is nothing in this life who has no wife to love or be loved by, and I feel certain that you have not erred in your selection and that the young lady will prove not only worthy of your affection but a great stay and support through life.

I write this from the heart of Zululand, where I hold the office of British Resident. My duties are chiefly to supervise the action of the thirteen chiefs to whom the country has been given, their government and the way they fulfil the treaty obligations. I am entirely on my own responsibility and have

to do just as appears right to me. And a proper responsibility I find it. Indeed it is no joke. I am not hard worked, but my brain is continually on the stretch to prevent the wily Zulu getting the better of me. Any mistake might cause endless complications. My pay is £1300, and a suitable Residency is to be built at once for me by Government. I correspond only with the High Commissioner direct. I had not forgotten you when the appointment was made, but there was nothing at all beyond an ordinary clerkship which I could offer you, and this was certainly not in your line. There is however a good prospect of something worth having turning up in six months from this, and then you will hear from me again. Between us I have to report *in extenso* on the whole question connected with Zululand and the additional officers required to assist me in managing, for the Secretary of State's consideration, but this I will do only after I have been three months in the country, and to-morrow the first month will expire. I think however you will not like it here—too lonely, and you should not come if you could get anything else. You can form no idea of my grandness here—in the eyes of the chiefs and people I am a great king. They are submissive and civil to a degree. Almost every day a fine fat ox is presented to me for my dinner that day by some Zulu swell who comes to pay his respects, and hundreds come up to my camp daily with 'Bayéte' salutes thundered forth so as to make the hills ring again. Most of the chiefs and headmen knew me personally when I was a border magistrate, and others by repute, so that I am not quite a stranger to them.

I did not at first feel inclined to take the office when Sir Garnet offered it to me, but after four weeks' consideration of the pros and cons I concluded to take it. . . . Please convey to your father my hearty thanks for his kindness to Jack. I appreciate it most sincerely.

With love,

Ever your affectionate friend,

M. OSBORN.

The last letter is headed British Residency, Zululand, May 15, 1880. After speaking of an opening in

the Colonial Service, which he thinks I might secure, Osborn says :

I returned to my headquarters here only last night, having been on a trip to meet the Empress at Landmanns Drift, Buffalo River. She was very good and kind to me and I saw a great deal of her ; indeed I was the only one not belonging to her suite who was spoken to at all by her. She sent for me twice daily and conversed freely on different topics. Brigadier-General Wood, who has charge of her, received me with open arms, which slightly surprised me after the paper war I carried on with him from Pretoria. He seems to be a very good fellow.

The Empress is still in Zululand visiting the various battle-fields. She intends to visit the spot where the Prince fell on 1st June the day of his death, and will remain about five days there to mourn and weep. I feel very sorry for her. She will be in Durban in time to sail for England on 26th June. Sir Garnet has left us quite suddenly. He is certainly a very great soldier.

I am still getting on well with my Zulus, who will persist in according royal honours to me. About a fortnight ago one single deputation waited on me numbering over four thousand men ! Their shout of ' Bayéte ' (the royal salute) made the hills ring again. Every day hundreds come up to salute and to state their grievances tribe against tribe. Everywhere quiet and good order prevails, which is satisfactory. With kind regards,

Your affectionate friend,

M. OSBORN.

After a stormy time in Zululand, Osborn retired from the public service on a pension. At first his idea was to settle in England, but ultimately our climate proved too much for him, and he drifted back to South Africa, where not long afterwards he died. I do not think that his departure from the world grieved him very much, for in addition to the loss of

his son Jack, my ward, he was called upon to endure other heavy sorrows. I never quite fathomed his religious views, but I remember that one night, when I was talking to him on such matters, he stretched out his arm and clasped a handful from the swarm of white ants that were flying past us. 'What is the difference between us and these?' he asked with a little laugh, and let them go again. By the way, I may mention he was the origin of my character Alston in 'The Witch's Head.' Dear old 'Mali-mat'—that was his Kaffir name, which means, I believe, 'so much money'—shrewd, kindly, honourable, the truest of friends, the bravest of men, surely you, if any do, belong to that class which Pope defined as the noblest work of God.

Osborn was a great believer in the virtue of the raw Kaffir. Thus, when he was magistrate of Newcastle, he did not hesitate to send down from Newcastle to Maritzburg, two hundred miles away, the total sum of the hut tax collected in his district—which, if I remember rightly, amounted to one or two thousand pounds—tied in gold-filled belts about the middle of some of his native policemen. The fact about the Kaffirs, and especially the Zulu Kaffirs, is, or was, that those whom they love and respect may trust them to the death, whereas those whom they despise or hate cannot lend them sixpence with safety or believe their word about the smallest matter. Their absolute fidelity to duty is well exemplified in the following story which Sir Theophilus Shepstone told me when we were travelling together over the Biggarsberg.

Once he had occasion in winter-time to send two Zulu messengers over these mountains with despatches for Maritzburg. They were caught in a snowstorm without coats, whereon the man who carried the

despatch-bag, feeling the approach of death, handed it to his comrade and bade him proceed. He himself crept into an ant-bear hole to die. As it happened, however, the warmth of his body in the hole kept him alive, and when he woke up in the morning the sun was shining. He emerged and, following on the road, presently found his companion dead and stiff. Taking the despatch-bag from the body he proceeded on his journey, and in due course delivered it in Maritzburg.

Among my letters of this period are two from Judge Kotzé. In one of these, which is dated June 27, 1880, the Judge complains bitterly of the placing of De Wet, the Recorder of Kimberley, over his head as Chief Justice, a very harsh step, the reason of which I never quite understood, as Kotzé was undoubtedly an excellent lawyer and an upright Judge. After some political remarks he says:

By the by, you speak of seeking employment in the Civil Service out here. Abandon the idea and take the following suggestion into careful consideration. Why not read for the Bar? You have a *splendid* opening in the Cape Colony or at the Diamond Fields. It will take you not more than three years, and by working honestly from six to eight hours per day you will have no difficulty in turning out a first-rate man in three years. Give it your serious attention. You have a certain prospect of a judgeship, and will without much difficulty get into the Cape Parliament. Mrs. Haggard will be pleased with Grahamstown (which I would recommend in preference to Cape Town), and you will have a *fine* and *thoroughly independent* career before you. . . . Pretoria is no longer what it was. The place is unbearable. Everybody at loggerheads with Government and his neighbours, and the contractors in the meantime making fortunes.

Kotzé's advice was sound, and to-day I wish that I had taken it, or rather sometimes I think I do. What



chiefly stood in my way, however, was my agreement with Cochrane, whom I did not like to desert, although he generously offered to release me. Also I wished to be up and doing, and did not like the idea of those three years of comparative inaction which would have prevented me from earning anything more till I was twenty-seven. Still I was destined to be called to the English Bar after all, as I hope to tell in due course.

Here I will end my story during the year and a half or so that I was absent from South Africa, and pass on to the sad tale of the Retrocession of the Transvaal.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OUR LIFE AT NEWCASTLE

H. R. H. and wife sail for Natal—Farm near Transvaal—Maritzburg—Dinner at Government House—Started for Newcastle—Adventures on journey—Hildrop—Boer revolt—Natal invaded—Majuba and Colley's death—Work on farm—Royal Commission—Sir Hercules Robinson President—Hildrop let to Sir Hercules and staff—Birth of H. R. H's son—President Brand and Sir H. de Villiers—Retrocession of Transvaal—Popular indignation—Farming—Return home—Mazooku.

My wife and I with two servants, a Norfolk groom of the name of Stephen—I forget his surname—who, a little touched up, appears as Job in my book 'She,' and a middle-aged woman named Gibbs who had been my wife's maid before marriage, three dogs, two parrots, and a 'spider' carriage, which was built to my special order in Norwich, left England somewhere towards the end of 1880. I think that we reached Natal before Christmas, and were greeted with the news of the Bronker's Spruit massacre, for I can call it by no other name. In short, we found that the Transvaal was in open rebellion.

It was indeed a pleasant situation. Newcastle, whither we desired to proceed, lies very near the Transvaal border, and the question was, Did I dare to take my wife thither? For some weeks we remained in Maritzburg, staying part of the time with Sir Theophilus and Lady Shepstone, and the rest in an hotel. Literally I was at my wits' end to know what to do. To advance seemed too risky; to remain

where we were was both wearisome and, with our servants, ruinously expensive.

At length my wife, who, I think, take her altogether, is the most courageous woman I ever met, announced that she would have no more of it : her house was at Newcastle two hundred miles away, and, Boers or no Boers, thither she would go. There were rumours that Sir George Colley, who was then the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Natal, intended to attack the passes of the Drakensberg with the few troops at his disposal. Nobody believed it, since the thing was obviously a madness. But I was not so sure. I went to Colonel (afterwards Sir Charles) Mitchell, the Colonial Secretary, and asked him in confidence if he knew anything. He replied—Nothing, but that I might be quite certain that so distinguished a soldier would never act foolishly.

So I bought two good horses—which afterwards died of the sickness—harnessed them to the ‘spider,’ and we started.

I think it was on the night before Colley left Maritzburg to take personal command of the troops at Newcastle that my wife and I dined at Government House. If so, this historical dinner took place on January 9, 1881. I believe that there were thirteen, of us at table, though on this point I am not absolutely clear, of whom three were ladies—Lady Colley, another lady whose name I forget, and my wife. The other guests were officers and the members of Colley’s staff. The only name that I can remember is that of young Elwes, who within a week or two was to die charging the Boer schanzes and shouting ‘Floreat Etona!’ I sat next to him at table.

My wife reminds me of an absurd little incident that happened at this dinner. Elwes, I think, was A.D.C. to Colley, and one of his duties—it used to be

mine when I was on the Governor's staff in the same house—was to write the menus in French. One of the items of fare recorded by him was *patés de mince*. In a silence such as happens at dinner-parties, Lady Colley was heard saying from the end of the table :

'Mr. Elwes, what are *patés de mince*? I never heard of a dish called *patés de mince*!' whereon everyone turned and looked at Elwes.

'*Patés de mince*, Lady Colley,' he stammered presently, his youthful face covered with blushes, 'is the French for mince-pies.'

Poor Elwes! He did not hear the last of his *patés de mince* during that meal. Thus do farce and tragedy often walk hand in hand.

In a few months' time Lady Colley, the other lady, my wife and I were the sole survivors of that dinner-party. The other lady died shortly afterwards. About the year 1888 my wife and I were guests at a dinner given by the late Anthony Froude. Lady Colley, as she was then, was another of the guests. Thus we three survivors of that fatal Government House dinner met again. When Lady Colley recognised us she burst into tears, and my wife was obliged to stand over her to screen her grief from observation.

Here are some extracts from a letter written by my wife to my father from the little town of Estcourt, and dated January 19, 1881—nearly thirty-one years ago.

We have at last summoned up courage to start up-country in spite of the Boers, the real fact being that we were getting dreadfully tired of doing nothing down in Maritzburg, which was besides most fearfully hot. We got to our first stage, Howick, last Friday, which luckily for us was a very pretty place with a comfortable hotel. I say luckily, because we were detained there by the rain till Monday. We then started at about 9.30 A.M. for Mooi River (a distance of thirty miles),

which we did not reach until about 8 o'clock in the evening. The roads were in a positively fearful state: we could only go very carefully at a foot's pace the whole way, and even then we got into some very nasty places. I walked a good part of the way, in fact we all did, as it was quite as hard work hanging on driving as walking. Yesterday we came on here, which was not half such a tiring day, as the roads were comparatively very good, and we are told that they will be so now for the rest of the way, which is a comfort. If we are not detained by rain or other mishaps we expect to get to Newcastle next Saturday. I quite forgot to tell you that the unhappy Gibbs came to sad grief on the way from Maritzburg to Howick, and all on account of her devotion to Bob. She was nursing the said spoilt animal on her knee when suddenly the carriage went into a hole, gave a lurch and nearly sent Bob flying. In her efforts to save him out fell Gibbs right between the wheels, but marvellous to relate she was not a bit hurt, only bruised her arm a little and got a good shaking. . . . At almost every stage we meet fugitives from the Transvaal, but they all seem to look upon Newcastle as safe. . . . With much love from us both to you all,

Your affectionate daughter-in-law,  
M. L. HAGGARD.

Truly this was an awful journey, especially as my wife was in a state in which great exertion was undesirable. The roads, as she says, were terrible, being cut up by the passage of guns and troops. Indeed, there were no roads—simply, in that wet season, breadths of mud-holes sometimes a hundred yards wide, of which holes you might take your choice. It was into one of these that poor Gibbs fell with the beloved terrier, Bob. Never shall I forget the splash she caused. The spectacle of an elderly British lady's-maid in that hole still clasping Bob to her bosom was almost weird. The hind wheels of the 'spider' went over her, grinding her deeper into the mire.

‘Good God!’ I said to Stephen, ‘she is done for.’

My further remarks were interrupted by a series of piercing yells.

‘Lord bless you, sir,’ answered Stephen, ‘if she can screech like that there ain’t much the matter.’

Nor was there, except mud and Gibbs’ voluble views upon South African roads.

A day or two after this we galloped in front of a fearful thunderstorm, of which the flashes kept striking behind us, and at last reached shelter just in time. On another day we ploughed through sodden peat flats, in which our wheels sank to the axles, to the edge of a river—I forget which river. On the farther bank was the inn. The night was coming on and the river was in full flood. What could we do? To get back across those flats was impossible; to sleep in the rain in the open carriage was impossible; to attempt to cross the flooded river was very dangerous. My wife, as usual, made up her mind at once. ‘Let’s try it,’ she said.

I felt bound to give Gibbs her choice.

‘Don’t you go a-asking of her, sir,’ said Stephen, ‘or we shan’t never do naughting. If we’ve got to drown, she may as well drown too.’ Stephen, I may observe, lacked affection for Gibbs.

So we ‘tried it,’ two brave and brawny Zulus wading into the water with us, and hanging on to the sides of the ‘spider’ in order to prevent it from overturning. A transport rider on the bank, who had warned us against the attempt, shouted valedictory messages: ‘When you are all drowned, don’t blame me. Remember that I told you so!’

I answered something appropriate to the occasion and my feelings, and in we went.

The stream was coming down like a mill-race and

rising every minute. Soon the horses were off their legs, but they were plucky beasts and struck out for the farther shore of the drift. The water ran through the bottom of the carriage, which began to float, but the brave Kaffirs hung on, although they were up to their arm-pits and could scarcely stand. Gibbs wailed softly in the background and clasped Bob to her breast. There were a few fearful moments of doubt, then, thank God! the horses got their feet again, and we dragged through, damp but safe, and slept that night in comfort in the inn.

Such were some of the incidents of that extremely arduous journey. At length we reached Newcastle safe and sound, and drove out to our house on the farm Rooipoint, about a mile and a half from the town. This house, which was named Hilldrop (the Mooifontein of 'Jess,' where it is actually described), was and no doubt still is a very pretty place, built by Osborn for himself when he was Resident Magistrate at Newcastle. It is backed by a rocky hill, and its broad verandah commands a wide and charming view. Round about it stood orange trees—I believe these died after we left—and to the right was a plantation of black wattles. For a colonial dwelling it was spacious, having a good drawing-room, and altogether the home was one where English folk could live in decency and comfort. Moreover our furniture had arrived, and for the most part been arranged by the indefatigable Cochrane—'that man who calls himself Mr. Cochrane,' as Gibbs once described him after some difficulty which interfered with her comfort.

I wish I could remember more of the sayings of Gibbs, for they were worthy of preservation. Only one returns to my mind, however. It was after our flight before the thunderstorm, a terrific thunderstorm,

I admit, which had reduced Gibbs to a perfect jelly of terror.

'Don't be so foolish, Gibbs,' said my wife, 'and make an exhibition of yourself. Look at me, I'm not frightened.'

'No, ma'am, I see you ain't,' answered the gasping Gibbs, 'and I tell you straight *I* don't call it ladylike!'

In short, by contrast with all we had undergone, the place seemed a perfect haven of rest. This, however, it was not destined to remain for long. First there were the refugees, some of them people I had known in the Transvaal, who came with their tales of woe and ruin, asking for shelter which we were unable to give. Then, to our dismay, we learned that on the very day of our arrival Colley had moved out to attack the Nek.

Two days later we heard the sound of firing, and getting back to Hilldrop I received the following note from Beaumont, the Resident Magistrate of Newcastle, who was an old friend of mine, now one of the Natal judges.

28/1/81.

I am sorry to say the troops failed this morning in their attack on the 'Nek' and had to retire to their waggon laager, after heavy loss. We have no further particulars. I do not think that Newcastle is in any danger. The signal for alarm in town is a bell; but should I think there is any occasion for it I will send out a runner to warn you. I wish I could give you a welcome under better circumstances, but we must make the best of things. With my kindest regards to Mrs. Haggard, upon whom I hope Mrs. Beaumont will soon be able to call.

W. H. BEAUMONT.

On the following day, January 30, I wrote a letter



to my father, which I have just recovered with the others.

You will see from the address that we have reached this in safety after a rather difficult journey owing to the villainous state of the roads. Old Gibbs shot straight out of the carriage twice but came to no harm. Louie is well and expressed herself very pleased with the place. . . . We have come out in very troublous times. When for various reasons we made up our minds to come up-country, Newcastle was looked upon as one of the safest places in the Colony, owing to the large body of troops concentrated there. Nobody dreamed that Sir George Colley could be mad enough to try and force the passes with such a handful of men, and I believe he was again and again warned of its impossibility. However, the day we got here he started, and a few evenings afterwards we heard the guns going on the mountains. Next came the intelligence that we had met with a crushing repulse. It appears that the Boers beat the troops back without difficulty, and from what I can judge it will take 5000 men and a great expenditure of life to force their position. Nearly all the officers actually engaged were killed, including poor young Elwes (Norfolk) whom I sat next to at dinner the other night. He was talking to me about you, and said that he saw you the other day at Lynn station talking to the barmaid. It is all very sad. I do not think that this place is in danger, but still these are anxious times for us all. Our men have retreated into laager near the top of the mountain, and the Boers are in laager on the top. When the reinforcements come there will be a fearful engagement and many officers will be picked off. All the Boers are in rifle pits behind stone walls. I think they will have to send more troops.

We have got all our things up here safely and have made the place quite pretty, but somehow one can take no pleasure in anything just now with blood being shed like water all round. Every time one sees a Kaffir runner coming to the house one feels anxious lest he should be the announcer of some fresh evil. . . . We will send you a longer letter in a mail or two, but just now we are head over ears in work arranging

the house, etc. And now good-bye. With best love from us both to all at home,

Believe me ever

Your most affectionate and dutiful son,

H. RIDER HAGGARD.

Such was our house-warming at Hilldrop.

On February 8th about midday once more we heard the guns at work in the neighbourhood of the hill Scheins Hoogte, about eleven miles from our farm. The firing was very heavy, that of the field-pieces being almost unceasing, as was the crash and roll of the rifles. At dusk it died away. Some Kaffirs came to Hilldrop and told us that a force of British soldiers were surrounded on a hill on the Ingogo River ; that they were fighting well, but that 'their arms were tired.' The Kaffirs added that they would all be killed during the night.

I have told the story of Ingogo in 'Cetewayo and his White Neighbours,' and I cannot tell it again; indeed, I have no heart to do so. It was a miserable and an aimless business, as we heard of it from the lips of the survivors.

After the Ingogo defeat, when the wounded were left lying on the ground through the raging African night, the Boers invaded Natal. One night, in the stillness, I heard the galloping of a vast number of horses. Some five hundred of the enemy had taken possession of the next farm to our own, which they looted. The Boers had descended into Natal, in order to attack the reinforcements. We colonists saw a chance, a desperate chance it is true, of cutting them off, or at any rate of inflicting great damage upon them. A number of us congregated at Newcastle with the idea of forming a volunteer corps. I was very doubtful whether I ought to join, seeing what were my family

responsibilities. I remember my young wife coming out of the house into the garden, where some of us were talking over the matter, and saying, 'Don't consider me. Do what you think your duty. I'll take my chance.'

Never did I admire any woman more than I did her upon that occasion. In all the circumstances, which in her case included the imminent birth of a child, I thought and think her conduct in this matter, and indeed throughout all these troubles, little less than heroic. But of such stuff is she made.

As it chanced, however, this particular adventure came to nothing. The authorities got wind of it, and if I recollect right, my friend Beaumont the Magistrate arrived on the scene with a message from the Government at Maritzburg or elsewhere to the effect that our proposed attack on the Boers was forbidden, and that if we insisted on carrying it out we should be repudiated; that our wounded would be left to lie where they fell, and that if the Boers chose to shoot any of us whom they took prisoner no remonstrance would be made, and so forth and so forth. It was a peculiar errand that he had to perform, but the British lion was a humble animal in those days; its tail was tucked very tightly between its legs. Also the authorities were naturally anxious to prevent the war from spreading to the civil population. So our proposed *coup* came to nothing.

Now followed a period of great alarm. We were surrounded by the enemy, and from hour to hour never knew on whom or where the blow might fall. Every night at Hilldrop we placed Kaffirs on the surrounding hills that they might warn us of the approach of the enemy. Well and faithfully did these men fulfil their duty; indeed, we were kept advised

of all that happened through the Zulu natives dwelling on our farm. Also my old body-servant, Mazooku, had joined me on my return to Africa, and with his friends night and day guarded us as a mother might her child. Night by night, sometimes in our clothes, we slept with about six horses saddled in the stable, loaded rifles leaning against the beds, and revolvers beneath our pillows.

Next came a rumour, apparently well substantiated, that the expected battle between the invading Boers and the reinforcements was actually to take place on the following day at a drift of the Ingagaan River upon our own farm, Rooipoint. It was added, probably with truth, that the main body of the Boers intended to occupy my house and the hill behind. This was too much, so, abandoning everything except our plate, we retreated into laager at Newcastle, and there spent several very uncomfortable days. For some reason that never transpired, however, the Boers never delivered the expected attack. It was the one military mistake that they made, for had they done so I believe they would have cut up the long line of reinforcements, and subsequently have taken the town of Newcastle without much difficulty. On the contrary, they withdrew to the Nek as silently and swiftly as they had come.

On February 17th the reinforcements marched safely into Newcastle. General Wood, however, who I think accompanied them, was sent down-country by Colley to bring up more reinforcements and to look after stores, a task which to the lay mind might have been equally well performed by some subordinate officer. I should add it was said that by mutual agreement of these two generals no further offensive movement was to take place until Wood returned again.

If so, that agreement was not kept, since on Sunday, the 27th of February, I heard the sound of distant guns, which most of the others attributed to thunder. So certain was I on the point that some of us rode to the camp to make inquiries. On our way through the town we learned that messages were pouring down the wires from Mount Prospect, and found the place full of rumours. At the camp, however, nothing was known ; indeed, several officers to whom we spoke laughed at us. It would almost seem as though Colley had undertaken his fatal movement without advising his base.

I cannot tell again the horrible story of Majuba. Afterwards Colonel Mitchell told me the tale of what was happening at Government House in Maritzburg. Into the office where I used to sit the messages poured down from Majuba, reporting its occupation and the events which followed as they occurred. So to speak, Majuba was in that room. As each wire arrived it was his duty to take it to Lady Colley in another part of the house. At length came a pause and then a telegram of two words: 'Colley dead,' and then—nothing more.

This message too Colonel Mitchell must take to the chamber where the wife sat waiting. He said that she would not believe it ; also that it was the most dreadful moment of his life.

In one of the letters published in Butler's *Life of Colley*, he writes to his wife that his good luck was so great and so continuous that it caused him to be afraid. Not in vain was he afraid, for can anything be more tragic than this man's history ! One of Wolseley's darlings, every advancement, every honour was heaped upon him. At last Fortune offered to him a soldier's supreme opportunity, and he used it thus ! Had he been content to wait, it was said at the time—and I for

one believe—that the Boers would have melted away. Or, if they did not, he would soon have found himself at the head of a force that might have commanded victory. He would have become one of the greatest generals in the Empire, and the history of South Africa would have been changed, for it was only defeat that brought about the Retrocession. But he had theories and he lacked patience. Or perhaps Destiny drove him on. In only one thing was it kind to him. It did not leave him living to contemplate his own ruin and the dishonour of his country. Peace be to him.

Now I will return, not without relief, to my own story, which is best set out in such letters as have survived. These remain clear and fixed ; about them can gather nothing of the uncertainties or mists of time and memory.

In one written by my wife to my mother from Hilldrop on March 7, 1881, she says :

As you will have seen from the papers, we are not altogether in an enviable position. The state of affairs out here is really becoming very serious. We are told that the troops now in camp at the ' Nek ' are perfectly panic-stricken by the continual defeats they have sustained, and that in the last engagement, when poor Sir George Colley lost his life, the officers had the greatest difficulty in getting their men to stand. Of course, as everyone says, it is not to be wondered at. Three times now have our men been sent out in small bodies to face double their numbers and have simply been shot down like sheep without being able to make any effectual resistance. In spite of the Boers being rebels one cannot help admiring the way in which they are conducting this affair. Their coolness and pluck are wonderful, and they have not made *one* false move yet. Add to this the fact that they are all splendid shots, and you will agree that it is no mean foe with whom we have to deal, though this is what our officers and men would not at

first believe. Hence these sad disasters. Poor Sir George Colley has paid dearly for his rashness, but, humanly speaking, it was far better for him to die as he did fighting bravely at the head of his men than to live with a lost reputation. Lost it decidedly would have been, for popular feeling was strong against him even before this last affair.

And now for a few words about ourselves. . . . The farm is pretty flourishing. We are now in the middle of haymaking, and the lazy Rider is routed out about 6 A.M. every fine morning to go and cut. He looks all the better for it, in fact I think we are both in better health than when we left England. We have lost another ostrich, luckily not a very good one, but the other birds seem to be doing nicely and some of them have splendid feathers. . . .

On May 3, 1881, I wrote :

MY DEAREST MOTHER,— . . . I do not know how to thank you all enough for the loving interest you have all shown towards us in our trouble. We were extremely surprised and, speaking from a personal point of view, delighted to get a telegram from Jack [my brother who afterwards became Consul at Madagascar, etc.—H. R. H.] the other morning announcing his arrival at the Cape. We thought he had given up all idea of coming.

Perhaps you will hardly have been surprised at my letter to my father telling him that we are seriously debating clearing out of this part of the world. I am sorry to say that every day that has elapsed since I wrote has only strengthened my conviction that henceforth we can look for no peace or security in South Africa.

I fear our property will suffer from this business. A little while since we could have easily got £3000 for the farm. I don't know if we shall be able to do so now. . . . I cannot tell you how sorry I shall be if we have to leave this place, as I repeat I think is probable. After a two years' struggle we were just beginning to do well, and had there been no war I think this would have developed into a very thriving concern. Latterly we have been clearing at the rate of over £2000 a year. . . .

In a letter to my mother, dated May 4, 1881, my wife says :

The High Commissioner, to whom we have let the house, is also expected, so I fear Jack will arrive to find us in rather a muddle. We shall have to live in a kind of picnic fashion, I expect for about a fortnight, as our house-room will consist of a bedroom and two tents!—one of which we shall convert into a kitchen and the other into a room for Jack. Mr. Cochrane and George Blomefield [a ward of my father's who had become our farming partner.—H. R. H.] are going over to the mill, where they will have to get on as best they can. Happily the rains seem to have come to an end for this season and we are now having bright sunny weather, just the right sort for camping out.

After talking of our losses from the horse-sickness, she adds :

The mill is now finished and ready to start. They made the first trial of it the other day, with rather disastrous results to poor George Blomefield. He went up a ladder and meddled with one of the safety-valves (the mill not going quite right), whereupon a tremendous noise was heard and a rush of steam and water came out. All the lookers-on fled for their lives thinking something fearful had happened, and Mr. B. in his hurry slipped his foot and came down with a crash upon his head, happily however without hurting himself at all. I am sure one of them will get blown up in the end, and am only glad Rider's talents do not lie in the machinery line. . . . I think myself that if we can get a good price for the farm and mill it will be wisest to leave this country and try some more peaceful colony, and I find that a good many of the Transvaal landowners are already on the move.

I still possess the agreement, dated April 6, 1881, under which I let Hilldrop 'for a residence for H.E. Sir Hercules Robinson and staff and for the use and service of the Royal Commission about to assemble under H.E.'s presidency' for a period of two weeks



certain with an 'option of renewal for a further period to complete the term of one month,' reserving only our own bedroom for my wife's use. No doubt as thrifty people the offer of £50 a week rent tempted us; also the domestic event which has been alluded to was not expected to occur until later. In this, however, we were mistaken, as the next letter shows.

If I remember rightly the Commission occupied the house for about five weeks, during which time we all got on very well together, and of course I heard much of what was going on. It was a strange fate which decreed that the Retrocession of the Transvaal, over which I had myself hoisted the British flag, should be practically accomplished beneath my roof.

On May 24, 1881, I write to my father :

I hope by now you will have received the telegram I despatched yesterday telling you of the safe birth of a son . . . a full three weeks before the child was expected to arrive.

I am now most thankful to be able to tell you that both dear Louie and her son are doing as well as possible, indeed Louie looks little if any the worse. . . .

Jack got here all right accompanied by Spice (who signalled her arrival by fighting the household cat at the top of a tree) about a week ago. He is very flourishing, but I fear there is no chance of his getting employment in Natal owing to the flood of Transvaal officials who have to be provided for somehow. His account of Vancouver Island is such as to make us abandon our idea of forming a company and going there, so I suppose we must stay on here and then come home. The Royal Commission are still in the house. I have dined with Sir Hercules once or twice; he is a very pleasant old gentleman. We don't at all know what is going to happen here. If it is war I only hope it will not be until Louie is well enough to travel down country. I don't want to stop here through another war. . . . The farm is going fairly. All our oxen that are in Government service have knocked up from work, so we have to spend about £300 in fresh ones, which is a great pull.

However it will give us a fine head of draught cattle next year.

About this time I received the following from Sir Bartle Frere :

ATHENÆUM CLUB, PALL MALL.  
July 20, 1881.

MY DEAR HAGGARD,—I am very much obliged to you for your most valuable and interesting letter of June 6th, which contains one of the best accounts I have read of the present miserable state of affairs in the Transvaal. I have done my best to make the truth known publicly and privately and have not yet given up hopes that the terrible evils of England forsaking her children may be averted. But *how* I hardly see. At present Mr. Gladstone is practically supreme in such matters, and his one idea seems to be to reverse all that has been done hitherto by his predecessors. I shall be very glad if you can find time to let me hear from you from time to time, giving your own observations and opinions exactly as you do in your letter of June 6th.

There is a very strong and growing feeling of dissatisfaction with the way in which Transvaal affairs have been mismanaged by the present Government, and the expression of this dissatisfaction would probably have been far stronger had not the Irish Land Bill so entirely absorbed public attention and the whole time of Parliament. Let me hear also about yourself, what you are doing and how you are prospering, and

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

H. B. E. FRERE.

The next letter in order of date that I find is one from Sir Theophilus Shepstone, headed Pietermaritzburg, June 16, 1881.

MY DEAR HAGGARD,—One of the little Schwikkard girls wrote me the news of the advent of your son and heir the morning of his birth and told me of the well-being of both mother and child, so that she prevented any anxiety as far as

we are concerned with regard to this important event. I congratulate you most heartily and wish every prosperity to all concerned in this little life, including the little life itself. Fortunately everything that is born in a stable is not a horse, or your boy would be either a Boer or a Royal Commissioner ; the latter he may become, but the former never. I suppose you will call him ' Joubert ' or ' Jorissen,' but ' Bok ' would make a shorter signature ; for shortness I think that I should prefer ' Juhan ' [a great Zulu chieftain.—H. R. H.], and for respectability ' Cetewayo.' [Of course all this was Shepstone's playful satire.—H. R. H.]

I quite agree with you about Sir Hercules Robinson ; from the little I saw of him I thought him straightforward ; I fancy, however, that he did not like his job.

There is nothing to be said about the Transvaal that would have the slightest effect just now ; the humiliation is determined upon and must be endured : natural causes and natural processes are all that can now be looked for to bring about amelioration. The next thing to look forward to is the effect that this humiliation to the British flag will produce at the Cape. The Transvaal rebellion was not a Transvaal question ; at the next general election in the Cape Colony the Dutch element will predominate in their Parliament, they will adopt the Dutch as the official language, and they will ask England to withdraw, and threaten vaguely if she does not. I can see no escape from the logic of facts which she has created ; she must withdraw ; and if from the Cape why not from Ireland or Canada or anywhere else ?

I am glad to hear that your farm is doing well. I hope you will make hay while the sun shines, for I suspect that the troops or the greater portion of them will soon be withdrawn. . . . Believe me, my dear Haggard,

Yours always sincerely,

T. SHEPSTONE.

The following extract from a letter written by my late brother John to my father, which has come into my hands with the others, shows the date of the departure of the Royal Commission, and what we thought





HILLDROP, NEWCASTLE, NATAL

of that body individually. It is headed Hildrop, Newcastle, June 3, 1881 :

MY DEAR FATHER,—You will have heard from Rider ere you receive this of the birth of his boy, so I will not enlarge on that subject.

The Royal Commission left this house for the Transvaal yesterday, so we left the tents in the garden and took re-possession of the building. I think most of them were sorry to go, and for many things we were sorry to lose them ; they were a remarkably nice set of men, from Sir Hercules Robinson downwards. . . . I next tackled Sir Hercules Robinson [as to an appointment he desired at the time.—H. R. H.], and was asked to dinner at Hildrop with Rider and Louisa. The latter did not attend. Among the guests at the table were Sir Henry de Villiers and President Brand of the Free State.

Enclosed in this letter is one from Sir Evelyn Wood to my brother, in which he states that ‘I do not myself anticipate remaining Governor of Natal.’ His dissent from the report of the Royal Commission will suggest a reason why.

I do not remember much of President Brand ; for some reason he made no great impression on my mind, but Sir Henry de Villiers I recall very well indeed, for we rode together and talked a good deal. He was a quiet man, pleasant and able, but of course Dutch by blood, and therefore, although he may not have known it himself, naturally in sympathy with Dutch aims and ambitions. In him the Boers had an advocate of the best class. Sir Hercules Robinson was a most agreeable Irish gentleman. Also he was an official, and not of the strongest sort. As a Royal Commissioner theoretically he was in an independent position, but he had a notable example before his eyes in the instance of Sir Bartle Frere of what happened to Colonial Governors who dared to take a line of their own. Of

this Commission Sir Evelyn Wood was the only really independent member, and he dissented from its most important findings.

Never shall I forget the scene on the market square of Newcastle—it must have been about the 21st or 22nd of March—when it became known that peace had been declared as a corollary of our defeats, and that the restoration of the Transvaal was practically guaranteed within six months. Some thousands of people were gathered there, many of them refugees, among whom were a number of loyal Boers, and with these soldiers, townsfolk, and natives. I saw strong men weeping like children, and heard English-born people crying aloud that they were ‘b——y Englishmen’ no more. Soldiers were raging and cursing, and no one tried to stop them; natives stood stupefied, staring before them, their arms folded on their breasts; women wrung their hands.

Then an idea struck the crowd; they made a rude effigy of Mr. Gladstone and, as was done in most of the other loyal parts of South Africa, burnt it with contempt and curses. It was a futile and perhaps a foolish act, but excuses must be made for the ruined and the shamed. They could not believe their ears, in which still echoed the vehement declaration of Sir Garnet Wolseley that no Government would dare under any circumstances to give back the Transvaal, and the statements, in the House of Lords, by telegram, and in other ways of various members of the Administration to the same effect.

And now I have done and am glad to have done with the matter of this great betrayal, the bitterness of which no lapse of time ever can solace or even alleviate, and will return to its results upon my own life.

On July 30, 1881, I sent to my father what I suppose was the last letter that I wrote to him from South Africa. It was in answer to one from him enclosing a communication from the late Mr. Blake, who was at that time my lawyer, in which for various reasons, both personal and connected with our property, they recommended our return to England.

MY DEAR FATHER,—I have delayed replying to your kind letter of June 22nd in order that I might have time to give it full consideration, and also to enable me to try to arrive at some satisfactory conclusion as regards the probable course of events in this country. I must now tell you that after thoroughly thinking the matter over I have made up my mind to return to England next month. This will probably seem a somewhat eccentric announcement, but my reasons are briefly as follows. First I have given due weight to what you and Mr. Blake write to me, and admit that there is a great deal in what you say. What brings me back in such a hurry however is the state of the country.

I can only trust that I have arrived at a wise decision. Of course you will understand that, under the circumstances, if we are to go, the sooner we go the better.

Cochrane is coming home with us on a trip. I am sorry to say that he is suffering from a prolonged attack of dysentery, and I think that a rest and change of air is the only thing that will pull him together again. The farm will be left in charge of George and Mr. North (our engineer), a very respectable man who has the advantage of experience of the country. . . .

I must add a few words about our farming life. Our estate, Rooipoint, covered something over three thousand acres. At any rate it was a large property lying between the Newcastle town lands and the Ingagagan River, in the centre of which rose a great flat-topped hill, the Rooi or Red Point, that gave it its name. From the very crest of this hill flowed, and doubtless still flows, a strong and beautiful spring of



water, though why water should appear at the top of a mountain instead of the bottom is more than I can say. At the foot of this mount we erected the steam-driven grinding mill which I had bought in England, our idea being that we should make our fortunes or at any rate do very well as millers. Whether this anticipation would or would not have been realised is more than I can tell, as we did not keep the farm long enough to learn. As a matter of fact, however, it was a risky business to import expensive machinery into a place that was not accustomed to machinery, since it involved the employment of an engineer and long and costly delays if anything went wrong with the parts of the apparatus.

Still our efforts were by no means confined to this mill. Thus we started the making of bricks, for which there was a good market in Newcastle. I used to labour at this business, and very hard work it was. Our energy, I remember, astonished the neighbourhood so much that Natal Boers used to ride from quite a distance to see two white farmers actually working with their own hands. One of the curses of South Africa is, or used to be, the universal habit of relegating all manual toil, or as much of it as possible, to Kaffirs, with the result that it came to be looked upon as a more or less degrading occupation only fit for black men.<sup>1</sup> Such, however, was the Dutch habit. The Boer's idea was to sit on the *stoep* of his house and grow rich by the natural increase of his flocks and herds, only cultivating sufficient land to provide his family with mealies and the other fruits of the earth. This system, it must be admitted, had its merits in a country where time was of no object and where land was so

<sup>1</sup> From Mr. Dawson's work on South Africa (pp. 269 and 343), published in 1925, it seems this trouble still exists.—ED.

plentiful that every son could in due course be accommodated with a farm of 3000 *morgen*.

Besides our milling and brick-making we were the first to farm ostriches in that part of Natal. In my experience the ostrich is an extremely troublesome bird. To begin with he hunts you and knocks you down. One of ours gave Cochrane a frightful drubbing, and through a pair of opera glasses I saw an unfortunate Kaffir barely escape with his life from its attentions by going to earth in an ant-bear hole like a hunted jackal. Of course the ostrich could not follow him into the hole, but it stood sentry at its mouth waiting for him to come out again. When attacked by an ostrich the only thing to do is to lie down quite flat. In this position it cannot strike you with its bludgeon-like foot, nor is its beak adapted to pecking, though it can and does dance and roll upon you and sit upon your head as though it were an egg which it wished to hatch.

These birds, so ferocious with human beings, are terribly afraid of dogs. I think that we lost two of ours through the visitation of wandering hounds at night that set them running furiously till they broke their necks in the wire fences. Its own voracity brought another to its end: for they will pick up pocket-knives or anything that attracts them. This fowl managed to swallow a huge sharp-pointed bone which fixed itself across the gullet in such a position that it would go neither up nor down. There was only one thing to be done—operate. So we operated, with a razor and without an anæsthetic. I only hope that such another job may never fall to my lot, for that ostrich was uncommonly strong and resented our surgical aid. However, we got the bone out and the creature recovered. Imagine our horror when, a few

weeks later, it appeared with another bone immovably planted in exactly the same place! This time we left it to fate, by which it was speedily overtaken.

Besides the ostriches we had a number of draught oxen and some waggons. Out of these we did very well, as we hired them to Government for transport purposes, though from these trips they returned dreadfully footsore and poor. But cattle also had their risks. Thus I remember our investing several hardly earned hundreds of pounds in a bunch of trek oxen, which we sent down to the bush-veld to recover. A month or two later came a message from the man who had taken them in, to the effect that they were all dead of eating a poisonous herb called 'tulip.' We often wondered if 'tulip' really accounted for their disappearance from our ken.

Also we made hay, rather a new departure in that district in our time, where the cattle were left to get through the winter as best they could. This hay-making was a profitable business, as the product was in eager demand at a high price. I remember selling the result of about a month of my own work for £250, and never in all my life have I been prouder of anything than I was of earning that money, literally with my hands and by the sweat of my brow.

This was the process—one that would make my English steward and labourers stare. Indeed, when I tell the former of it, he listens politely but, I am quite sure, in his heart believes that for his benefit I have wandered into the familiar fields of fiction. We had imported a hay-cutting machine, I believe one of the first seen in those parts. Having selected a patch of level veld on which to operate, and harnessed, I think, three horses to the machine, I would start out in the dewy morning, at sunrise, with a Kaffir leader.

Then we commenced operations. I sat on that dreadful apparatus and managed the levers and knives; the Kaffir led the horses. The grass was thick and plentiful, so thick indeed that it was difficult to see stones and ant-bear holes. The former must be avoided by sudden and Herculean efforts, or the knives would be shattered. As for the latter, occasionally we went into them to the depth of two feet or so, and then the trouble was to prevent myself from being thrown on to the knives.

Altogether grass-cutting had its dangers, though, as it happened, I never came to any serious harm. After the hay was once mown the rest was comparatively simple. We invented a gigantic rake, to which we attached two mules or horses, and by this means, after it had lain for a day or so in the sun to dry—for we never attempted to turn it—dragged the hay into enormous cocks, since the building of a regular stack was beyond our resources. These cocks we covered with cloths, or anything we could get, and when they had settled and sweetened by the generated heat, we sold them to the purchasers, generally commissariat officers, who carted them away. I suppose they were satisfied with the stuff, as they always came back for more. Or perhaps they could get nothing else.

Further, we grew mealies or Indian corn, but here the trouble was that stray cattle and horses would break in at night and eat them.

Such is a rough outline of our various agricultural and other operations on the Rooipoint farm. Personally they form my pleasantest recollections of the place, though, were I to start again, I would not have so many irons in the fire. On the whole we made a good deal of money, though our outgoings and losses were also heavy. To farm successfully in Natal requires, or required, much capital and, owing to the poor quality

of the Kaffir labour, incessant personal supervision. These Kaffirs, however, who were most of them our tenants, were in many ways our best friends ; moreover they afforded us constant amusement when they were not engaged in driving us mad by their carelessness.

I remember one of them breaking the best dinner dish and calmly bringing the pieces to my wife. 'I have collected and carried these fragments to the Inkosikaas (head lady),' he explained with a sweet smile, 'that the Inkosikaas, being clever like all the white people, may cause them to join themselves together again.'

The Inkosikaas surveyed him and them with speechless indignation. When, however, some of the family silver—I think it was spoons—was missed and ultimately found in the stable dust-heap, and when the best new table knives were discovered being used by Mazooku and his friends to dissect a decaying ox that had died of lung sickness, her indignation was no longer speechless. Indeed the offenders fled before her.

Of course these Zulus gave everybody a native name. My wife they called by a word which meant 'a pretty white bead with a pink eye,' while Gibbs was designated by a descriptive title, *anglice* 'a worn-out old cow who would have no more calves.' I cannot recollect whether anyone, even Stephen, dared to give to her an un-Bowdlerised rendering of this not too complimentary appellation. Certainly I avoided doing so. Poor Gibbs ! Her trials in that strange land were many. Still we brought her safe home to England, where she remained in our service for a year or two, then left and vanished away as modern domestics do. I wonder whether she still lives, and if so, where she is spending her old age !

Before we left Hilldrop we had a great sale of our

imported furniture, of which the catalogue survives to this day. It was a highly successful sale, since such articles were then rare at Newcastle. Thus I think a grand piano, which I had bought second-hand for £40 in England, fetched £200, and the other things went at proportionately good prices. Only the 'company' got hold of all the stock of wine which was exposed upon the verandah and therein drank our healths, whereon the watchful auctioneer knocked it down to the drinkers at a high price per dozen.

So at last we bade farewell to Hilldrop, which neither of us ever has, nor I suppose ever will, see again except in dreams. I remember feeling quite sad as we drove down the dusty track to Newcastle, and the familiar house, surrounded by its orange trees, grew dim and vanished from our sight.

There my son had been born ; there I had undergone many emotions of a kind that help to make a man ; there I had suffered the highest sort of shame, shame for my country ; there, as I felt, one chapter in my eventful life had opened and had closed. It was sad to part with the place, and also to bid good-bye to my Zulu servant Mazooku. The poor fellow was moved at this parting, and gave me what probably he valued more than anything he possessed, the kerry that he had carried ever since he was a man—that same heavy, redwood instrument with which more than once I have seen him battering the head of some foe. It hangs in the hall of this house, but where, I wonder, is Mazooku, who saved my life when I was lost upon the veld ? Living, perhaps, in some kraal, and thinking from time to time of his old master Indanda, of whose subsequent doings some vague rumours may have reached him. If so, were I to revisit Africa to-day, I have not the faintest doubt but that he

would reappear. I should go out of my hotel and see a grey-headed man squatted on the roadside who would arise, lift up his arm, salute me and say, 'Inkoos Indanda, you are here; I am here, come back to serve you.'

I have seen the thing done. As a young man Sir William Sergeaunt was in South Africa—I forget how or when—and then had a Zulu servant, a Mazook. He departed and thirty years later returned. *His* Mazook appeared from some kraal, of which he was then the head, and was with him during all his stay. I saw him there.

Or if my Mazook should be dead, as well he may be, and if there is any future for us mortals, and if Zulus and white men go to the same place—as why should they not?—then I am quite certain that when I reach that shore I shall see a square-faced, dusky figure seated on it, and hear the words, 'Inkoos Indanda, here am I, Mazooku, who once was your man, waiting to serve you.' For such is the nature of the poor despised Zulu, at any rate towards him whom he may chance to love.

I do not know that I felt anything more in leaving Africa than the saying of good-bye to this loving, half-wild man. I remember that I made him some present when we parted—I think it was a cow, but am not sure.

On Wednesday, the 31st of August, from the deck of the *Dunkeld*, we saw the shores of Natal recede from our sight for ever.

## CHAPTER IX

### FIRST ESSAYS IN AUTHORSHIP

Return to England—Called to Bar—Wrote 'Cetewayo and his White Neighbours'—Reception of the work—Why H. R. H. took to writing fiction—'Dawn'—J. Cordy Jeaffreson—Press notices encouraging but sale small at first—'The Witch's Head'—Quiet life at Ditchingham—Letters from Shepstone—Life in London—Practice in Divorce Court.

ON our return to England in the autumn of 1881 we went to stay at Bradenham for a while and rested after our African adventures. I do not remember anything that we did there, except that we were at the Sandringham ball. A note in my wife's diary mentions that the Princess, afterwards Queen Alexandra, 'looked lovely in pearl grey satin and was the prettiest woman in the room with the exception of Lady Lonsdale.'

Before Christmas we moved to a furnished house at Norwood. Here, having all my way still to make in the world, I set to work in earnest. First of all I entered myself at Lincoln's Inn, but found to my disgust that before I could do so I was expected to pass an examination in Latin, English History and, I think, Arithmetic. My Latin I had practically forgotten, and my English History dates were somewhat to seek. I represented to the Benchers that, after having filled the office of Master of the High Court of the Transvaal, this entrance examination was perhaps superfluous, but they were obdurate on the matter. So I set to work and, with the assistance of a crammer, in a month learned more Latin than I had done all



the time I was at school ; indeed, at the end of a few weeks I could read Caesar fluently and Virgil not so ill. The end of it was that I passed the examination at the head of the batch who went up with me, or so I was given to understand.

Another thing that I did was to write my first book, ' Cetewayo and his White Neighbours, or Remarks on Recent Events in Zululand, Natal and the Transvaal.' It contained about two hundred and fifty closely printed pages in the first of its editions, and represented a great amount of labour. I was determined that it should be accurate, and to ensure this I purchased all the Blue-books dealing with the period of which I was treating, and made *précis* of them, some of which I still possess.

But it is one thing for an unknown person to write a book of this character, and quite another for him to persuade anyone to publish it. I find among my papers a pencil draft of a letter which I sent to many publishers. It runs :

I write to inquire if you are inclined to undertake the publication of a short work I am now finishing. It is the result of some six years' experience in South Africa in official and private capacities, and contains amongst other things a private history of the annexation of the Transvaal which, as I was on Sir T. Shepstone's staff at the time, I am qualified to write.

The parts of the book, however, which would, I think, ensure the sale at the present moment, both here and in the Colonies, are the chapters dealing with the proposed grant of responsible government to Natal and the question of the reinstatement of Cetewayo. As you are no doubt aware, the ex-king will visit England very shortly, when I think an opportunely published work on the subject would find a ready sale.

The book is written in as interesting a style as I can command and would be published under my own name.

Awaiting the favour of a reply,

I am, etc.

Needless to say the reply always came, but notwithstanding the tempting bait of 'the interesting style,' its character may be guessed. Nobody wished to have anything to do either with Cetewayo or his white neighbours.

At length I was faced with the alternative of putting the results of my labours into the fire or of paying for their production in book form. A letter from Trübner and Co., dated May 18, 1882, informs me that my MS. will make a volume of three hundred and twenty pages 'like enclosed specimen,' and 'if you will send us a cheque for the sum of £50 sterling we will undertake to produce an edition of seven hundred and fifty copies.'

I sent the cheque, although at the time I could ill afford it, and in due course the work appeared. On the whole it was extremely well received by such papers as chose to review it seriously. Some of these notices I still possess, favourable and unfavourable. One from the *Daily News*, which comes under the latter category, dated August 23, 1882, is amusing to read to-day. It is written in the 'high sarcastic' strain. Here is a sentence from it.

Mr. Haggard distrusts Cetewayo and is shocked at the notion of reinstating him on any terms. He is also shocked at the 'retrocession of the Transvaal' and thinks we have not yet seen the end of the troubles in store for us, owing to our neglect to persevere in the work of exterminating the Boers, and so forth. These views have already been pretty fully set forth—so fully, in fact, that the necessity for a further exposition of them at this time does not seem very obvious. The freshest, and certainly the most amusing thing in Mr. Haggard's

book is his solemn warning that our policy, which he is pleased to stigmatise as 'sentimental,' may end in alienating the affections of 'the Colonists,' etc.

Here we see the party politics of the day at their best, or rather at their worst. The late Lord Carnarvon, who, it may be remembered, was Colonial Secretary during most of the years when I was intimately connected with South Africa, wrote to me :

'I am glad to find that my view as regards the Transvaal should be endorsed by one who had such good opportunities of judging as yourself'; and again :

*Private.*

DEAR MR. HAGGARD,—I am very much obliged to you for your extremely interesting book on Cetewayo. I have been so engaged with the accumulations of eight months' business and with all the hundred and one questions which arise on our return to England that I have only been able to look at those parts which most closely interested me personally from their relation to events in which I was myself concerned; but I read these with great satisfaction. The English public was so deceived by misrepresentations of the annexation of the Transvaal that the real history was never understood; and the humiliating surrender of it was accepted in partial ignorance at least of the facts. A true statement of it is therefore very valuable, and I am grateful to anyone who has the courage to say what really did occur. It was as needless as it was discreditable; and though the unexpected discovery of gold is solving many difficulties, the unworthy nature of the cession has done great mischief to all time. I hope I may have the opportunity of talking about this to you.

Believe me,

Very faithfully yours,

CARNARVON.

I gladly quote an extract from a letter written by Sir Marshal Clarke from Basutoland, since it tempers

my criticisms of Sir Hercules Robinson (Lord Rosmead), a gentleman of whom I have the most kindly personal recollections. He says, referring to this book :

I don't think you have done quite justice to Sir Hercules Robinson. He appears to me to have been the right man for the place and for the time. He is not a very popular Governor, but his opinions carry great weight here as well as at home ; he had a very difficult position at first—one of his principal difficulties arose from the impossibility of foreseeing how far his views would be supported at home—and while he appears to me to have acted with unswerving loyalty, his influence has done much to mitigate antipathies of races and to maintain our character for fair dealing with whites and blacks.

I also received letters from the late Lord Lytton, Lord Randolph Churchill, and others.

Except for any influence it may have had upon certain leading minds and organs of opinion, the book at this time proved a total failure. At this date (1883) an eager public had absorbed one hundred and fifty-four copies of the work. Say Messrs. Trübner :

You will no doubt consider the account a most unsatisfactory one, as we do, seeing that we are out of pocket to the extent of £82 15s. 5d. Against this, of course, we hold the £50 advanced by you, but we fear that we are never likely to recover the balance, £32 15s. 5d.

As it happened, however, Messrs. Trübner did in the end recover their £32. When I became known through other works of a different character the edition sold out. Perhaps the public bought it thinking it was a novel ; at any rate, I have come across a letter from a melancholy youth who made that mistake.

Since that time there have been other and cheaper editions, and in 1899, at the time of the Boer War, that part of the book that deals with the Transvaal was

republished at one shilling and sold to the extent of some thirty thousand copies.

To this day there is a certain demand for the book. That it has already been extensively used by writers dealing with this epoch of African affairs in works of reference and elsewhere I have reason to know, although these have not always acknowledged the source of their information and judgments.

So it comes about that my only effort as an historian was not made in vain, although at first it seemed futile and fruitless enough. I may add that certain prophecies set down in its pages in 1882 have since that time been remarkably fulfilled.

If they [*i.e.* those who direct the destinies of the Empire] do not [take certain steps alluded to above] it is now quite within the bounds of possibility that they may one day have to face a fresh Transvaal rebellion, only on a ten times larger scale.

And again:

Unless they [*i.e.* South African problems] are treated with more honest intelligence, and on a more settled plan than it has hitherto been thought necessary to apply to them, the British taxpayer will find that he has by no means heard the last of that country and its wars.

Some twenty years after I wrote these words England did have to face a Transvaal war on a ten times larger scale, and the British taxpayer did hear that he was called upon to pay a bill of some three hundred millions sterling. Also about twenty thousand of our countrymen, among them a young nephew of my own, were summoned to lay down their lives on the African veld. Such was the cost to the Empire of the reversal of Sir Theophilus Shepstone's policy in the interests of an English political party.

Whilst we were at Norwood a little incident occurred which resulted in my becoming a writer of fiction. At the church which my wife and I attended we saw sitting near to us one Sunday a singularly beautiful and pure-faced young lady. Afterwards we agreed that this semi-divine creature—on whom to the best of my knowledge I have never set eyes again from that day to this—ought to become the heroine of a novel. So then and there we took paper, and each of us began to write the said novel. I think that after she had completed two or three folio sheets my wife ceased from her fictional labours. But, growing interested, I continued mine, which resulted in the story called ‘Dawn.’

Years afterwards, in 1894 indeed, on the occasion of the issue of one of the numerous editions of that tale, I inserted the following little dedication :

AFTER MANY YEARS

I dedicate this my first story  
to

That Unknown Lady,  
once seen, but unforgotten, the  
mould and model of Angela,  
the magic of whose face turned my mind  
to the making of books.

Here I may as well tell the history of this book. Some of it, or rather of the first draft of it, I think I wrote at Norwood. Towards Christmas of 1882 my wife and I made up our minds to return to this house at Ditchingham, which was standing empty and furnished, while I pursued my studies for the Bar. Hither we came accordingly a little while before the birth of my eldest daughter. She was named Angela after

the heroine of my novel, which shows that at this time it must either have been written or well advanced.

There appear to be three drafts of this work, the first of which (incomplete) is named 'Angela,' after the heroine; the second, five hundred and fifty-four closely written foolscap sheets long (!), estimated, I observe, upon the title-page to print into about a thousand pages, called 'There Remaineth a Rest'; and the third, bound MS. (unnamed), four hundred and ninety-three foolscap sheets. The history of them is briefly as follows. With pain and labour I wrote the work—five hundred and fifty-four foolscap sheets do take some labour in the actual matter of calligraphy, without considering the mental effort. Then I sent the result to sundry publishers—who they were I entirely forget. Evidently, however, Smith and Elder must have been one of them, as is shown by the allusion to James Payn in a letter from the late Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson, which I shall presently quote.

These publishers, or their readers, had no great opinion of 'Angela' or 'There Remaineth a Rest,' by whichever title it was then called. After these rebuffs most people would have put that mighty mass of manuscript into the fire or an upstairs cupboard. But I must have been a persistent young man thirty years or so ago, and I did not take this course. On the contrary, I consulted Mr. Trübner, with whom I had become personally acquainted since the publication of 'Cetewayo and his White Neighbours.' Indeed he and I struck up some kind of a friendship, as is shown by the fact that he gave me his photograph in a little olive-wood frame, which photograph has stood on a shelf in my room from that day to this. It is a clever old face which is pictured there, and he was a clever old man. He used to tell me anecdotes in his queer,

half-German talk about the literary celebrities of bygone days, and I remember that his description of George Eliot was extremely epigrammatic and amusing. This, however, I will not repeat. He was good enough to take some interest in the story, and to suggest that it should be sent to the late Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson for his opinion. This was done, and on April 27, 1883, Jeaffreson sent me his opinion, which is so thorough and able that I will quote from it, merely omitting his detailed criticism of the work.

24 CARLTON ROAD, MAIDA VALE, N.W.:

April 27, 1883.

DEAR SIR,—I have read your story deliberately and read it with considerable interest, which would of course have been greater had I read it in type.

Payn was not wrong. Your opening chapters have a superabundance of action, and several highly dramatic positions, but they lack dramatic interest, *i.e.* the interest that comes from an exhibition of the influence of character upon character. Novels being what they are just now, it is small praise to say that Angela's love-story is better than two-thirds of the stories that are published. I could say much more in its favour. Still I urge you not to publish it in its present rude form. Indeed, the story has caused me to take so much interest in its writer that I could almost *entreat* you not to publish it.

I take it you are a young man. You are certainly a novice in literature: and like most beginners in the really difficult art of novel-writing you have plied your pen under the notion that novels are dashed off. Inferior novels are so written, but you have the making of a good novelist in you, if you are seriously bent on being one. It would therefore be ill for you in several ways to make your debut with a tale that would do you injustice. I don't counsel you to try again with new materials. I advise you to make your present essay, what it might be made, a work of art and a really good performance.

You have written it with your *left hand* without strenuous



pains; you must rewrite it with your *right hand*, throwing all your force into it. If you produce it in its present crude state you will do so only to regret in a few weeks you did not burn it. If you rewrite it slowly with your right hand—suppressing much, expanding much, making every chapter a picture by itself, and polishing up every sentence so that each page bears testimony to the power of its producer—the story will be the beginning of such a literary career as I conceive you to be desirous of running. Get the better of the common notion that novels may be dashed off—by remembering how often Lord Lytton rewrote ‘*Pelham*,’ thinking over every part of it, now compressing and now expanding the narrative, before he ventured to give it to the world. Go to the Charles Dickens rooms in the S. Kensington Museum and observe the erasures, the insertions, the amendments of every paragraph of his writing. . . .

Here follows a long and able criticism of the story.

Having read your MS. I have packed it and will do anything you like with it—with the exception of sending it to a publisher in its present state. You will succeed in literary enterprise if it be your ambition to do so.

Your story disposes me to think you have that ambition. It also causes me to hope that I may make the author’s acquaintance. If you call on me when you are in town I shall be delighted to ask your pardon for writing to you with such unmannerly frankness and self-sufficiency.

Believe me to be, my dear sir,

Yours very sincerely,

JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON.

What an extraordinarily kind heart must have been that of Mr. Jeaffreson! He was a very busy man, producing as he did works of fiction and of biography, in addition to his antiquarian labours that involved the deciphering of thousands of old documents, by means of all which toil he earned a moderate income. Yet he found time on behalf of an individual totally unknown to him, or to anybody else in this country,

to labour through several hundred not too legible sheets of manuscript, and to write a masterly criticism of their contents. Moreover, for all this trouble he refused to accept any reward. Certainly it has been my fortune to make acquaintance with much malice in the world, but on the other hand I have met with signal kindness at the hands of those engaged in literary pursuits, and of such kindnesses I can recall no more striking example than this act of Mr. Jeaffreson, of whom I shall always entertain the most affectionate memory.

Well, I took his advice. From a tiny note on the first page of the manuscript it would seem that I began to rewrite 'Dawn,' or 'Angela,' as it was then called, on May 15, 1883, and finished the last of the four hundred and ninety-three foolscap sheets on September 5th of the same year. That is, in just under four months, in addition to my legal studies and other occupations and the time taken in attending in London to eat my dinners at Lincoln's Inn, I wrote nearly two hundred thousand words. Nowadays the average length of a novel may be put at seventy-five thousand words, or even less, though mine are longer. But in the early eighties, when stories were brought out in three volumes and readers had more patience than at present, it was otherwise. I toiled at that book morning, noon, and night, with the result that at length my eyesight gave out, and I was obliged to finish the writing of it in a darkened room.

Still I did finish it notwithstanding the pain in my eyes, and then went to London to see an oculist. To my relief he told me I was not going blind as I feared, but that the trouble came from the brain which was overworked. He ordered me complete rest and change, during which I was not to read anything. So we went for a month to Southwold, where we took

lodgings. The only occupation that I had there was to walk, or, when this was not feasible, like a child to throw a ball against the wall of the room and see how often I could catch it on the rebound. However, the treatment proved effective.

The book being finished, or nearly finished, and the heroine, Angela, rescued from the untimely death to which she was consigned in the first version and happily married to her lover, once more I sought the assistance of Cordy Jeaffreson, who gave me a letter introducing me to Mr. Arthur Blackett of the firm of Messrs. Hurst and Blackett. It runs :

DEAR BLACKETT,—Some months since I read the MS. of a novel of which the bearer of these presents, Mr. Rider Haggard of Ditchingham House, Bungay, is looking for a publisher. Mr. Haggard having distinguished himself in another field of literature, I was not surprised to find his first essay in prose fiction a thing of no ordinary power. It was a tale of character, pathos, incident, and *new ground* : so good that had it been less so I should have advised him to publish it as it came to me. The goodness of the story, however, made me urge him to rewrite it, so that every chapter should be in harmony with its best and strongest parts. He has acted on my advice, and if the result of his renewed labour answers my anticipation, he has produced a work that will make your reader rub his hands and say ‘ This will do.’ . . .

Messrs. Hurst and Blackett wrote to me, and well do I remember the jubilation with which I read the letter :

We shall be very happy to undertake the publication of your novel on the following terms. To produce the work at our own expense and risk. To pay you the sum of £40 on the sale of four hundred copies and £30 on the sale of every hundred copies after. The title ‘ Angela ’ has been used before. . . .

Needless to say I accepted the offer with gratitude and promised to find another title. Three days later

the agreement arrived under which I sold the copy-right to Messrs. Hurst and Blackett for a period of one year only from the date of publication. In their covering letter they informed me that they only proposed to print five hundred copies in the three-volume form, leaving me at liberty to make any arrangements I liked for a cheap edition, if one should be demanded.

About this time, namely just after he had read the MS. of 'Angela,' I received the following interesting but undated letter from Mr. Jeaffreson :

DEAR SIR,—Can't you arrange to dine with us at seven o'clock on the 10th of next month? We could talk all round the literary question over a cigar in my study after dinner. Could you succeed in literature? Certainly up to a certain point: unquestionably up to the point you indicate, though you might never earn as much money as the two novelists you mention; for in that respect they have been singularly fortunate. But you may not hope to succeed in a day. You might become famous in a morning; but you may not entertain the hope of doing so. You must hope only to succeed by degrees,—by steady work, slow advances, and after several disappointments. Moderate success in literature is easily attainable by a man of energy, culture, and resoluteness who can afford to work steadily and play a waiting game. At twenty-one a man is necessarily impatient: at twenty-six a man has neither the excuse of youth nor the excuse of advancing age for impatience. How I envy you for being only twenty-six. I am old enough to be your father. I could not have written as good a novel as Angela's story when I was twenty-six. I have already perused your 'Cetewayo.' It is a far more difficult thing to interest readers in imaginary persons and incidents than to entertain them with writing about facts and characters in which they are already interested. It was because I saw you really knew your characters that I urged you to make the most of them. Do come and see me.

Yours cordially,

JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON.

The following letter from myself to my sister Mary, which she found and returned to me a few years ago, throws some light upon the above :

DITCHINGHAM HOUSE : *May 5* [1883].

MY DEAREST MARY,—The enclosed letters may interest you. I consider Jeaffreson's very encouraging on the whole, though he is inflicting a lot of extra labour on me. However, after I have been up for this examination I will go at it, and hope to finish the book in from two to three months. I do not altogether agree with Mr. Jeaffreson's ideas as to changing the end of the book; indeed my own sentiments about it are much the same as those expressed by Miss Barber [a schoolfellow of my wife's who was more or less living with us at the time. She is a sister of the late Marjorie Barber, 'Michael Fairless,' the well-known author of 'The Road-Mender,' etc., and afterwards married my brother, John G. Haggard, R.N.] in the letter that I forward you, because it puts the other side of the question very well. I wrote and asked Jeaffreson what he meant when he said that I could succeed in literature, and if in his opinion I could hope to compete with men like Payn and Blackmore, and in the very nice letter that he sent me in answer he said that 'unquestionably I could succeed to the point I indicated.' This of course is encouraging, but I am not so sure about it.

I am going to dine with him on the 10th, when I shall try to modify his views about changing the end of the book. . . .

To this day I often wonder whether Jeaffreson was right in making me turn my story inside out and give it a happy ending. My idea was to present the character of a woman already sweet and excellent in mind and body, and to show it being perfected by various mortal trials, till at length all frailties were burnt out of it by the fires of death. In the second version I continued to carry out this scheme as well as I could, only the final fires through which the heroine had to pass were those of marriage to a not very interesting young man. I have always found young men—and,

if they are to fill the position of heroes, the novel-reader insists that they must be rather young—somewhat difficult to draw. Young men, at any rate to the male eye, have a painful similarity to each other, whereas woman is of an infinite variety and therefore easier to depict. With elderly men, such as old Allan Quatermain, to take an instance, the case is different. With these I have had no trouble, perhaps because from my boyhood my great friends have always been men much older than myself, if I except the instances of Sheil or Brother Basil, and that other friend who died, of whom I have already written. Now I am reaping the sad fruits of this idiosyncrasy, since nearly all of those to whom I was deeply attached have gone before me, although, thank Heaven! a few still remain, such as Arthur Cochrane, Andrew Lang, and Charles Longman.

My criticism on 'Dawn' considered as a whole—that is, so far as I recollect it, for I have not reread the book for many years—is that it ought to have been cut up into several stories. However, it has pleased, and apparently still continues to please, a vast number of persons, and not long ago I was much amused to see in an article in *The Times* that at Pekin—or Hong-Kong—it is one of the favourite subjects of study among the Chinese students of English literature. Perhaps an old aunt of mine, who still lives at the age of nearly a hundred, was right when she declared that the book was too full of 'amateur villains.'

However, in due course it appeared in charming type, such as we do not get in novels nowadays, and three nice volumes bound in green, which I admire as I write. Certain of the reviews of it still remain pasted in a book. They were not very many nearly thirty years ago, or perhaps, as there were no Press-cutting

agencies, one did not see them. On the whole, however, they seem to have been fairly favourable. Since 1883 I have read hundreds, if not thousands, of reviews of my books, good, bad, and indifferent, but I can safely say that few if any of them have pleased me more than that which appeared of 'Dawn' in *The Times*.

'Dawn' [said *The Times*] is a novel of merit far above the average. From the first page the story arrests the mind and arouses the expectation. . . . This is, we repeat, a striking and original novel, breathing an elevated if somewhat exaggerated tone.

I wonder who wrote that notice! Be he living, which is scarcely probable, or dead, I offer him my gratitude. And yet I know not whether I should be grateful to this kindly critic, since his words, more than any other circumstances, encouraged me to try another novel.

As regards 'Dawn' itself, it was more or less of a failure—of course I mean at that time, for in after years it became extraordinarily successful.

One of the most appreciative and indeed enthusiastic readers of this tale at the time was old Mr. Trübner, whose advice had encouraged me to make the attempt of its writing. Indeed I was told by one of his relatives that he continued its perusal to within a few hours of his actual death. Whether he finished it or not I cannot now remember. Scoffers might say that it finished *him*.

The new novel upon which I embarked ultimately appeared under the title of 'The Witch's Head.' Failing to find any magazine that would undertake it serially, in the end I published it with Messrs. Hurst and Blackett on practically the same terms as they had offered me for 'Dawn.' Although, except for the African part, it is not in my opinion so good a story

as 'Dawn,' it was extremely well received and within certain limits very successful. Indeed, some of the reviews were quite enthusiastic, although, as I may here remark, I was unacquainted with a single person who made a business of reviewing fiction, or indeed with anyone connected with the Press. Never did a writer begin less equipped with friends who were likely to be able to do him a good turn. All I could do was to cast my fictional bread upon the literary waters.

The notices of 'The Witch's Head' naturally delighted me; indeed, after the lapse of more than a quarter of a century they still make pleasant reading. Also they caused the book to go quickly out of print and to be pirated in America. But this success would not tempt my publishers to reissue it in a cheaper form, a venture that they thought too risky. I hawked the work about and ultimately found some other publishers—who have long since ceased to publish—who agreed to bring it and 'Dawn' out each in a two-shilling edition, and nobly promised me one-third of the profits. But in that generous agreement was a little clause that afterwards nearly proved my ruin. It bound me to allow this firm to republish any other novel I might write during the five following years, in the same form and on the same terms. To such a document as this in my ignorance—there was no Authors' Society in those days—did I set my hand, with results that shall be told later. These, however, did not alarm me at the time, if I really considered them, as, having then passed my final examination for the Bar without any assistance in the way of coaching, I determined to abandon the writing of fiction and devote myself entirely to my profession.

Three works had I produced, namely, one history and two long novels. The history had cost me £50 to



publish, and for the two novels I had received exactly the same sum in all ; in short, the net returns were at that time *nothing*, and this for books that have since sold by the ten thousand copies, not to mention pirated editions. Thus I find that, during six months of the present year, 4204 copies of ' Dawn ' and 5656 copies of ' The Witch's Head ' were sold in a cheap edition, besides others at a higher price, which, as these works were written about twenty-eight years ago, is not a total to be despised.

To return : had it not been for a curious chance my literary efforts would have ended with the publication of ' The Witch's Head,' and probably by now my labours at the Bar in this or some other land would almost have obliterated them from my memory. But, as it happened, I read in one of the weekly papers a notice of Stevenson's ' Treasure Island ' so laudatory that I procured and studied that work, and was impelled by its perusal to try to write a book for boys.

Outside of this matter of my attempts at fiction I have little to add as to our life at Ditchingham before we migrated to London when I began to practise at the Bar. We lived very quietly, for we were not well off, and an estate which used to produce sufficient to support a country place of the smaller sort and those who dwelt in it, began to show greatly lessened returns. The bad years were upon us, and rents fell rapidly ; moreover the repairs required were legion. Also, from one cause and another, little or nothing came out of the African property, which shared in the depression that followed on the giving back of the Transvaal.

Under these circumstances, outside members of my own family our visitors were few, and in the main we had to rely on ourselves and our little children for company. I should add that in 1884 another daughter

was born to us, who is now Mrs. Cheyne. She was named Dorothy, after the heroine of 'The Witch's Head,' or in full, Sybil Dorothy Rider. My recollection of this period is that it was rather lonely, at any rate for me, since my friends were African, and Africa was far away. However, I worked very hard, as indeed I have done without intermission since I was a rather idle boy at school, both at writing and the study of the Law. Between the intervals of work I took walks with a dear old bulldog I had, named Caesar, who appears in 'Dawn,' and a tall Kaffir stick made of the black and white *umzimbeet* wood, which I still have, that reminded me of Africa. At times, too, I got a day's shooting on our own land or elsewhere.

However, I had so many resources in my own mind, and so much more to do than I could possibly compass, that all these matters troubled me not at all. I was determined to make a success in the world in one way or another, and that of a sort which would cause my name to be remembered for long after I had departed therefrom, and my difficulty was to discover in which way this could best be done—in short, to search out the line of least resistance. So I possessed my soul in patience and worked and worked and worked. Often I wonder what estimate those who lived about me, and whom I met from time to time, formed of the studious young man who was understood to have been somewhere in Africa. I imagine that it was not complimentary, for if I understood them they did not understand me.

Some pleasures I had, however. My journeys to London to eat my dinners at Lincoln's Inn were a change. So were the examinations, though these I faced with fear and trembling, having read up for them entirely by myself, which I imagine few people do.

Occasionally some of my old African friends came to see me when they were on visits to England. Thus Sir Theophilus Shepstone came, and with what delight did I welcome him ! Here is an extract from a letter of his, in which he alludes to his proposed visit, dated from London on May 26, 1883 :

I have only just received your note of the 23rd. I see that you sent it to the Colonial Office, but I have not yet been there, for I don't think they care much for me, except perhaps a few personal friends, and with the same exception the feeling is mutual as far as I am concerned. I think I shall make my number there about noon on Monday for the purpose of seeing those I care for, but for nothing else. I shall be very glad indeed to have a look at you again. How is your good wife ? I hope well and strong.

Another letter from Sir Theophilus in this year has some allusions of more general interest, so I will quote most of it.

I CHARLES STREET, LONDON : *August 21, 1883.*

MY DEAR RIDER,—Your warm-hearted and to me most touching farewell letter reached me last night on my return from a few days' rushing about the country to say some good-byes.

I am sure I need not say, although it is pleasant to me to say it, that all the affectionate feeling which I know you entertain for me fills a warm place in my heart for you and for your dear wife. May God bless and prosper you both ! Of course no one can tell what may happen in the future, or whether this is a permanent or only a temporary parting. At the dinner which was given me by the Empire Club Sir Robert Herbert spoke of me and of my services in the most remarkable language, and said plainly that I was still a young man so far as capacity for work went, and that he hoped soon to see me discharging some high function, etc. for the good of the country, and so on. It appeared as if he spoke from some intention of which he had knowledge ; but my friend Sir W. Sergeaunt, who sat

next me, said that if such a speech had been made by anyone else it would have meant a good deal, as it was it meant nothing ; perhaps so. Of course every day I have in England adds to my consciousness of the influence that I could exert if I tried ; but what is the use of it with such an abject Government as now rules and will for years to come, I fear, rule England ?

I am glad that my speech did not wholly disgust you ; I had no idea that the dinner was to be what it was, still less did I expect that reporters would be there, so I congratulated myself when I sat down. I shall look forward to the publication of your book with a great deal of interest ; the trouble is that the real merits of a book are not the measure by which it is meted ; as crushed strawberry is preferred to the beautiful natural colour of the fruit because it happens to be the fashion of the season, so with books : even they must pander to the taste of the hour whether it be good or bad, or they will not be read and therefore not bought. I hope, however, that the taste will be good when your book comes out ; because, if it is, I have no doubt of its success. . . .

Always affectionately yours,

T. SHEPSTONE.

Towards the end of this letter Sir Theophilus says he is sailing in a few days for South Africa. I do not think that he ever saw the shores of England again. It is needless to add that Sir William Sergeaunt was right in his estimate of the value of Sir Robert Herbert's speech. No further permanent employment was ever offered to him. Indeed, it was after this date that the persecution of him began, of which I have already written.

In 1883 Osborn wrote me a letter concerning some *imantophyllum*<sup>1</sup> plants that he had collected for me in Zululand, which at this moment, twenty-eight years afterwards, are blooming in the greenhouse, in the

<sup>1</sup> One of these plants was still blooming in Sir Rider's bedroom in 1925.—ED.

course of which letter he makes some rather interesting remarks.

ZULU RESERVE, *via* STANGER, NATAL;

*August 2, 1883*

. . . The place I am living at now is about a hundred miles south of Inhlazaty and is one of the loveliest spots in South Africa. I have a very fine forest within half a mile of my house, and a sea view a good sixty miles along the coast. My position here as supreme chief representing the paramount Power is certainly a great improvement on the last.

You will have learnt ere this of Cetewayo's fate. It could not have been otherwise: he was bound to come to grief, as from the day he set foot in Zululand—since his restoration he has never ceased in doing that which he ought not to have done. He proved himself to be as bad a character as ever wore a head-ring. It is to be hoped that he will do better in the happy hunting-grounds whither he betook himself on Saturday, 21 July, through the persuasive influence of several gleaming blades and sundry rifle bullets. As to myself I am getting thoroughly sick and tired of this dark country full of dark deeds of evil and violence. . . . I suppose that by this time you will have developed into a full-blown barrister, and I need not tell you that from my heart I wish you every success. You ought to try for an appointment as Attorney-General in a colony (Crown), as you have the pull of private practice in addition to your official employment in such an office. . . .

It is evident that when Sir Melmoth Osborn wrote thus of the death of Cetewayo as having taken place on July 21, 1883, he was deceived by some false rumour which had reached the Reserve from Zululand proper. Cetewayo did not really die until February 8, 1884, and Osborn saw his corpse before it was quite cold. An account of the circumstances of his death, which Sir Melmoth told me afterwards he believed to have been caused by poison, will be found on pp. 28 and 29 of the Introduction to the 1888 and



DITCHINGHAM HOUSE, BUNGAY



subsequent editions of my book 'Cetewayo and his White Neighbours.'

I think that we left Ditchingham, which at the time I thought I had let for some years to a gentleman who unhappily died before he took possession, at the beginning of 1885, about ten years after I began life in South Africa. Now with a wife and three children I was practically beginning life again in a small furnished house in West Kensington at the age of twenty-eight or thereabouts.

I remember, as one does remember trifles, that we drove in a railway bus from Liverpool Street to the West Kensington house, which personally I had not seen. We passed down the Embankment, and my little son, whom I was destined to lose, kneeled upon the seat of the bus and stared at the Thames, asking many questions.

After my arrival in London I began to attend the Probate and Divorce Court. Soon I found, however, that if I was to obtain a footing in that rather close borough, I must do so through a regular gate, and I entered into an arrangement with Bargrave (now Sir Henry Bargrave) Deane to work in his chambers. He was a connection of mine, my cousin Major George Haggard having married his sister. She died young. At that time her father, the well-known lawyer old Sir James Deane, was still alive, and I remember acting as his junior in some Divorce Court case. Bargrave Deane is now one of the judges of the Probate and Divorce Division.



## CHAPTER X

### ' KING SOLOMON'S MINES ' AND ' SHE '

' King Solomon's Mines '—Andrew Lang—Estimate of Lang's character—Anecdotes of Lang—Cassells and ' King Solomon's Mines '—Instant success—Letters from R. L. S.—Bazett Haggard and R. L. S. in Samoa—The writing of ' Jess ' and ' She '—What I shall be remembered by—Fifteen months' work—' She ' dedicated to Lang—Published by Longmans—Letters about it—The Sherd of Amenartas.

WHETHER I wrote ' King Solomon's Mines ' before or after I entered Bargrave Deane's chambers I cannot now remember, but I think it must have been before. At any rate I recollect that we brought up from Ditchingham a certain pedestal writing-desk, which had always been in the house and has returned thither, for it now stands in my wife's bedroom, and added it to the somewhat exiguous furniture of our hired abode. It stood in the dining-room, and on it in the evenings—for my days were spent in the Temple—I wrote ' King Solomon's Mines. ' I think the task occupied me about six weeks. When the tale was finished I hawked it round to sundry publishers, Hurst and Blackett among them, none of whom if I remember rightly, thought it worth bringing out.

At length, I know not how, the manuscript, which to-day presents a somewhat battered appearance, reached the late W. E. Henley, who appears to have brought it to the notice of Mr. Andrew Lang. How I first came into contact with my friend Andrew Lang—that is, where and when I met him—I cannot recall.

This, however, must have been subsequent to the following note :

1 MARLOES ROAD: *March 28* [1885].

MY DEAR SIR,—Your paper 'Bottles' has reached me as London editor of *Harper's*. I am much pleased by it, but I am unable to accept anything except by permission of the American editor. . . . I am glad to take this opportunity of thanking you for the great pleasure 'The Witch's Head' has given me. I have not read anything so good for a long while.

Faithfully yours,

A. LANG.

What the paper 'Bottles' may have been I am not now quite sure. I think, however, that I can identify it with a short tale which subsequently appeared in a magazine, perhaps the *Cornhill*, under the title of 'The Blue Curtains.' At any rate I have forgotten the circumstances of the story, and do not know whether a copy of it remains in my possession.

When Lang's next letter was written—it is only dated 'Sunday'—I gather from its tone that I had made his personal acquaintance. Its subject is 'King Solomon's Mines,' and it runs :

DEAR MR. RIDER HAGGARD,—I have got as far as Sir Henry's duel with the king. Seldom have I read a book with so much pleasure : I think it perfectly delightful. The question is, what is the best, whereby I mean the coiniest, way to publish it? As soon as possible I will find out what Harper's *Boys' Magazine* is able to do. I believe that all boys' magazines pay hopelessly badly. There is so much invention and imaginative power and knowledge of African character in your book that I almost prefer it to 'Treasure Island.'

The rest of the letter deals with possible methods of bringing out the work.

Lang's next letter on the subject is dated

October 3rd, and shows that by now we were on more or less intimate terms.

DEAR RIDER HAGGARD,—Many thanks for 'K.S.M.' How grand the map is. . . . Abstain from politics ; let civilisation die decently as die it must, and as we have no fight in us. I don't belong to the Voting classes. *Ni Elettori ni Eletti.*

Yours very truly,

A. LANG.

P.S.—My people, with whom I have been in Galloway, prefer 'Dawn' to 'The Witch's Head.' I don't. 'Dawn' is too steep, especially Lady Bellamy, and George, and Philip, and the heroine. The *writing* and the sentiment pleased me very much, but I barred the *Astral Body*.

Perhaps before I go any further I should try to give some estimate of Andrew Lang, whose character I have had opportunities of observing through many years. Take him all in all I think him one of the sweetest-natured and highest-minded men whom it has ever been my privilege to know, although a certain obtrusive honesty which will out, and an indifferent off-handedness of manner, has prevented him from becoming generally popular. Moreover, he has always been supposed to be somewhat of a mocker and *farceur*, as is exemplified in his Press nickname of 'Merry Andrew.' Yet the truth is that his laughter is often enough of the sort that is summoned to the lips to hide tears in the eyes. This may be seen by attentive students of his poems, and, in truth, few are more easily or more deeply moved by anything that appeals to the heart, be it national, or personal.

Of his abilities I speak with some diffidence. On all hands he is admitted to be perhaps the soundest and ablest critic of his time, but when it comes to his place as an historian, or as a student and recorder of matters

connected with myth, ritual, and religion, I find myself incompetent to judge of his real status, which doubtless the future will decide, though personally I believe it will be a very high one. On such matters, however, only experts can express opinions of real value. Lang never claimed to be a creator, and whenever he sets to work to create, which he has not done of late years, his wide knowledge and his marvellous memory of everything he has read—and little worth studying in ancient or modern literature has escaped him—prove positive stumbling-blocks in his path. I noticed this particularly when we were evolving 'The World's Desire.' With that modesty which so often distinguishes those who have much to be proud of, he once described himself to me as 'A hodman of letters,' a description that may be paralleled by Mrs. Lynn Linton's rather sharp saying—to myself I believe, although of this I am not sure—that 'Andrew Lang would be the greatest writer in the language if only he had something to write about.' The fact is, of course, that he has always had too much. Like the amorous Frenchman he has ever been wont to *éparpiller son cœur* upon a hundred subjects. I should add that Mrs. Linton was one of his great admirers. In a letter which she wrote to me in 1890, and which is before me at this moment, she says, 'I simply *adore* his work.' Again, further on in the same epistle, she speaks of her 'delight in his most exquisite work.'

The truth is that Lang is *par excellence* a *littérateur* of the highest sort, perhaps the most literary man in England or America. When he is not reading he is writing, and he writes more easily than he talks, at any rate to most people. Also some of his poetry is wonderfully beautiful. If verses like 'The White Pacha,' its companion 'Midnight, January 25th, 1886,'

and 'A Dream' are doomed to die, and with them others as good, I wonder what will live! Again, what majestic lines are these upon the Odyssey :

So gladly, from the songs of modern speech  
Men turn, and see the stars, and feel the free  
Shrill wind beyond the close of heavy flowers,  
And through the music of the languid hours,  
They hear like ocean on a western beach  
The surge and thunder of the Odyssey.

Of his extraordinary readiness I need say little, as it is known to all men. Still, as it may be forgotten when this book is published, if that ever happens, I will give two instances. Once he called on me ; we were going for a walk together, but I was not ready to start. So he asked for paper, and in half an hour or so finished a leading article—I think it was for the *Daily News*—which he sent straight to the office by a cabman, to appear without the submission of a proof. I read that article afterwards ; it was on some Shakespearian subject which involved many allusions and much quotation. I believe that it contained no error.

On another occasion I was travelling with him from St. Andrews to Edinburgh, and Dr. Boyd, better known as A.K.H.B., was our fellow-voyager. He was a great conversationalist and talked to Lang almost without ceasing. Presently Lang took off the tall hat he was wearing, placed it on his knee, produced paper and pencil, set the paper on the crown of the hat and began to write like a spiritualist automatist, if that is the right word, all the time keeping up a flow of argument and conversation with A.K.H.B. At Edinburgh I saw him post the results, without re-reading, to the editor of the *Saturday Review*. The

article appeared in due course without his seeing a proof, and written in his usual clear and beautiful style.

Such is the professional man, but of the friend I know not what to say, save that I reckon it as one of the privileges of my life to be able to call him by that much-misused name; the tenderest, the purest and the highest-minded of human creatures, one from whom true goodness and nobility of soul radiate in every common word and act, though often half-hidden in a jest, the most perfect of gentlemen—such is Andrew Lang.

To return to the history of 'King Solomon's Mines.' Ultimately that book found its way to Messrs. Cassells, recommended to them, I believe, by Mr. Henley. Subsequently Henley reproached me with having taken it out of his hands, and said that he could have got me much better terms. But I never did take it out of his hands; indeed I never knew that it was in his hands. If my memory serves me, I heard direct from Messrs. Cassells informing me that they would publish the book and asking me to call *re* the agreement.

At any rate I called and in that great building saw a business-like editor whose name I never knew. He pointed out that the company was prepared to offer me an alternative agreement. The first of the two agreements conveyed the copyright to Messrs. Cassells in return for a sum of, I think, £100 paid down. The second offered me £50 on account of royalties, to be calculated 'at the rate of ten per cent. of the published price of the book on all copies sold by them during the continuance of the copyright, reckoning thirteen copies to the twelve.'

After my previous experiences as an author £100

on the nail had great attractions. I had no particular belief in the story which I had thrown off in my leisure hours as a mere *jeu d'esprit*, especially after its rejection in other quarters. Even Mr. Lang's kind expressions of opinion carried no conviction to my mind, for I did not understand all that it meant coming from such a source. I set him down as an amiable gentleman with a taste for savages and boys' books; it did not occur to me that he saw such things every day, and that when he wrote to one who was practically a stranger that he almost preferred this particular boys' book to 'Treasure Island,' the compliment was high and indeed extraordinary. So after a brief moment of reflection I told the business-like editor that I would sell the copyright for £100, and he departed to fetch the agreement.

As it chanced, however, there sat in the corner of the room a quiet clerk, whom I had never even noticed. When the editor had departed this unobtrusive gentleman addressed me.

'Mr. Haggard,' he said in a warning voice, 'if I were you I would take the other agreement.'

Then hearing some noise, once more he became absorbed in his work, and I understood that the conversation was not to be continued.

Still a moment remained for thought.

'Why the dickens,' I reflected to myself, 'did he say that to me? He must have had some reason.' The business-like editor re-entered the room bearing the document in his hand.

'I have changed my mind,' I said as he presented it to me: 'I will not sell the copyright; I will take the royalty agreement.'

Undoubtedly the quiet clerk in the corner, who was acquainted with the estimate that had been formed

of the book by his employers, did me a very good turn, as did my knowledge of men when I acted so promptly on his hint.

The royalty that I accepted might have been higher, at any rate after the sale of a certain number of copies, but it was infinitely better than the acceptance of a small sum down for the copyright of 'King Solomon's Mines,' of which the sale has been very great and at present shows signs of increase rather than of diminution.

Many years later this gentleman wrote reminding me of the incident and forwarding a book that he had published.

'King Solomon's Mines,' which was produced as a five-shilling book, proved an instant success. Published about the beginning of October, on December 9th Messrs. Cassells wrote to me that they had already sold 5000 copies more or less, a large sale for a boys' book by a practically unknown man. I wonder how many copies they have sold up to Christmas 1911! In one form and another the total must run to hundreds of thousands.

Before the book appeared we had gone down to Norfolk for part of the long vacation, not to Ditchingham, which was let, but to a farmhouse at Denton adjoining a farm of our own, where I employed my holiday in writing 'Allan Quatermain,' the continuation of 'King Solomon's Mines.' One day I chanced to visit the little town of Bungay and there to see a copy of the *Saturday Review* which contained a two-column notice of the latter work. It was written by Lang, although this I did not know at the time. With delight my eye fell upon such sentences as 'All through the battle piece "The Last Stand of the Greys," Mr. Haggard, like Scott at Flodden, "never stoops his wing"'; and



'to tell the truth we would give many novels, say eight hundred (that is about the yearly harvest), for such a book as "King Solomon's Mines."'

By the way, things in this respect have changed since 1885. I believe that the 'yearly harvest' of British novels now numbers nearly three thousand.

I went back to the farm that night feeling sure that my book was going to succeed. A week or so later I received a note from Lang in which he says: 'The *Spectator* in a "middle" gives you more praise than *I* did, and is neither known personally to you, I fancy, nor an amateur of savages, like me. I hope they will give a review also. . . . I never read anything in the *Spectator* before with such pleasure.'

One day I took the manuscript of 'King Solomon's Mines' to be bound by Mr. H. Glaisher the bookseller. In the carriage of the Underground Railway I perceived an old lady engaged in a close, indeed an almost ferocious study of the map printed at the beginning of the printed volume which rested on her knees. This was too much for me. Drawing the original map from my pocket, I placed it on *my* knee—we were seated opposite to each other—and began to study it with like attention. The old lady looked up and saw. She stared first at her map and then at mine, and stared, and stared. Twice she opened her mouth to speak, but I suppose was too shy, nor did I, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of my map, written in blood upon a dirty piece of torn linen, the shirt-tail of Don José da Silvestra, give her the slightest encouragement. The end of it was that she seemed to come to the conclusion that that railway carriage in which we were alone together was no place for her. Suddenly, as we were about to leave a station, she sprang up and leapt from the train, at which, the unfolded map still

in her hand, she gazed bewildered until it vanished into the tunnel.

Among the many letters that I received about ‘King Solomon’s Mines’ perhaps the most interesting that I can find were from Robert Louis Stevenson. The first of these, undated, as they all are, is written from Skerryvore, Bournemouth, where he was living at the time. Here I should state that to my sorrow I never met Stevenson face to face: always we just missed each other.

DEAR SIR,—Some kind hand has sent me your tale of Solomon’s Mines; I know not who did this good thing to me; and so I send my gratitude to headquarters and the fountain-head. You should be more careful; you do quite well enough to take more trouble, and some parts of your book are infinitely beneath you. But I find there flashes of a fine weird imagination and a fine poetic use and command of the savage way of talking: things which both thrilled me. The reflections of your hero before the battle are singularly fine; the King’s song of victory a very noble imitation. But how, in the name of literature, could you mistake some lines from Scott’s ‘Marmion’—ay, and some of the best—for the slack-sided, clerical-cob effusions of the Rev. Ingoldsby? Barham is very good, but Walter Scott is vastly better. I am, dear sir,

Your obliged reader,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Of course I answered Stevenson’s letter—by the way, I have not the least idea who sent him the book—thanking him and pointing out that he had overlooked the fact that Allan Quatermain’s habit of attributing sundry quotations to the Old Testament and the Ingoldsby Legends, the only books with which he was familiar, was a literary joke.

Stevenson wrote back, again in an undated letter from Bournemouth and on a piece of manuscript paper:

DEAR MR. HAGGARD,—Well, yes, I have sinned against you ; that was the part of a bad reader. But it inclines me the more to explain my dark saying. As thus :

You rise in the course of your book to pages of eloquence and poetry ; and it is quite true that you must rise from something lower ; and that the beginning must infallibly (?) be pitched low and kept quiet. But you began (pardon me the word) slipshod. If you are to rise, you must prepare the mind in the quiet parts, with at least an accomplished neatness. To this you could easily attain. In other words, what you have still to learn is to take trouble with those parts which do not excite you.

Excuse the tone of a damned schoolmaster, and believe me,

Yours truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

The next letter, also from Skerryvore, Bournemouth, which, because of its allusions to 'King Solomon's Mines,' although undated, must have been written at this time, is an enigma to me. I have not the faintest idea to what it refers.

DEAR MR. HAGGARD,—Is it not possible to make a gratuitous donation *inter vivos* ? Could not that be done in a separate instrument ? I know not if it matters ; but if there were any ready way of gaining the point, I might adopt it. My law is all to the wind ; and indeed I never knew but a taste.

I thank you at least for the remark.

I come rarely to town, and am usually damned sick when I do. But if I can, I'll try to see you. (I know a cousin of yours here by the way.)

What are you about ? I am again at a boys' story ; but I've been a year at it already and may be longer.

Yours very truly,

R. L. STEVENSON.

P.S.—Further reflection on 'K.S.M.' makes me think you are one who gets up steam slowly. In that case, when you have your book finished, go back and rewrite the beginning up to the mark.

My case is the reverse: I always begin well, and often finish languidly or hurriedly.

*P.P.S.*—How about a deed of partnership?

This 'deed of partnership' on the face of it would seem to suggest some scheme of collaboration. Yet I do not think that this could have been the case—for the following reason. I remember that my late brother Bazett, who was afterwards an intimate friend of Stevenson's in Samoa, told me that someone, I know not who, had written to him suggesting that he and I should collaborate in a story, and that he had returned an angry and offensive answer to the suggestion, as I dare say it was quite natural that he should do. This answer, it seems, had however weighed upon his mind. At any rate Bazett informed me that Stevenson on several occasions spoke to him with deep regret as to his petulant reply. This is all I know, or at any rate all that I can recollect, of the matter. Yet what else can have been referred to in the above letter I am at a loss to guess.

Stevenson's remark as to his finishing languidly is interesting, and, so far as my judgment goes, his romantic work shows its truth. Thus to my fancy the first part of 'Treasure Island' is far and away better than its end. In an adventure story what is called style, however brilliant, is not enough: the living interest must be kept up to the last page; it should increase to the very end. Of course I know that many of our critics, like those of Alexandria in the first centuries of our era, think and preach that style is the really important thing, much more important than the substance of the story. I cannot believe that they are right. The substance is, as it were, the soul of the matter; the style is its outward and visible body. I prefer a creation with a great soul, even if its form

is somewhat marred, to one with a beautifully finished form and very little soul. Of course when the two are found together, a rare event, there is perfection. Also people differ in their ideas of what style really is. By it some understand inverted sentences, unusual words and far-fetched metaphors or allusions, making up a whole that it is difficult to comprehend. Others hold that the greater the simplicity of the language, the better the style. I am not an authority, but my own view is that above all things the written word should be clear and absolutely readable, and that work which does not fulfil these conditions can scarcely be expected to endure. It runs a grave risk of passing with the fashion of the hour. To take a single instance, the Authorised version of the Old Testament, considered as literature, seems to me to fulfil all the requisites of good writing, in fact to be style in the truest sense. Yet the meaning remains perfectly clear, and were those books to cease to be studied for their religious contents, they would still always be read as a model of plain and vigorous English.

But to return to Stevenson. Here I will add the last letter save one that I received from him, though again I do not know to what it refers, since the enclosure of which he speaks is missing, or at any rate has not been found at present. Like the others it is undated, but the allusion to 'Nada the Lily' shows that it must have been written about twenty years ago, at the beginning of 1892.

VAILIMA PLANTATION, SAMOAN ISLANDS.

RIDER HAGGARD, ESQ.

DEAR HAGGARD,—In cleaning up the hideous mess which accumulates about the man of letters I came on the enclosed sheet. Its filthiness will indicate its age. But there is internal evidence which to me dates it still further back; and that is

the reference to your brother Bazett. I now know him well and regard him with the most sincere and lively affection and respect. Indeed we are companions in arms and have helped each other back and forth in some very difficult and some very annoying affairs. This has given a wonderful jog to my sense of intimacy with yourself until I begin to have a difficulty in remembering that I have never seen you. Two remarks and I leave my filthy enclosure to speak for itself. First, the equations on the fly-leaf were not in the least intended for you—they're pieces of a lesson in the Samoan language—and you must kindly regard them as non-existent. Second, 'Nada the Lily' is A.I.

Sincerely yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

I only wish I could find the 'filthy enclosure,' or at least remember with what it had to do.

I have one more allusion to my brother besides the letter which came to me with 'The Man Haggard.' It is written on a little triangular bit of foolscap pinned into the manuscript of 'Nada the Lily.' I suppose that Lang must have sent it to me:

'If you see Haggard, tell him we have a great affection for his brother. Our home rejoices when we see him coming; and that Chaka mourning for his mother is great.'

Here is this last letter pinned into the first of the two accompanying, parchment-bound volumes, that which is entitled 'An Object of Pity; or, The Man Haggard. A Romance. By Many Competent Hands. Imprinted at Amsterdam.' These volumes were sent to me by Stevenson in July 1893.

TIVOLI HOTEL, APIA, SAMOA,  
SOUTH PACI.

DEAR RIDER HAGGARD,—I send you herewith a couple of small (and, so to speak, indecent) volumes in which your brother and I have been indulging in the juvenile sport of shying bricks at each other. *Honi soit qui mal y pense*, say I. And

I hope you will say the same. We were a large party, with nothing to do.—Lady Jersey, my wife, Captain Leigh, your brother and I, and Mrs. Strong, my daughter-in-law—and that which we wrote was not according to wisdom. I have heard some of yours called in question for steepness; here is your revenge.

Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

The companion volume is entitled 'Objects of Pity; or, Self and Company. By a Gentleman of Quality. Imprinted at Amsterdam.' It is corrected throughout in my brother Bazett's handwriting. I should judge that it went to press without his having the advantage of seeing proofs. Pinned to the title-page is the following letter to me from Bazett.

APIA, SAMOA: July 17, 1893.

DEAR RIDER,—Enclosed letter from R. L. Stev<sup>n</sup>. speaks for itself. He says we all had nothing to do. He is wrong there. *They* wrote the 'Object of Pity' on the days I was at work at Com<sup>n</sup>. I did not write my letter till 3 [word illegible] after, when Stevenson insisted on having it printed and took it to Sydney and had it printed. I was riled at being called 'an object of Pity' *rather*, so set to and gave them a Roland for their Oliver.

We have had a very bad time here. I have seen sights of 'the French Revolution'—heads carried about in the streets with yells and shouts—wounded and dead carried along. Also a beastly bloody axe which decapitated 'young Mataafa' shoved under my nose to admire and adore. I told my friend 'Safolu' to take his beastly thing away and he seemed quite surprised. . . . These books are R. L. S.'s gift to you—write him a line. . . .

Your loving brother,

BAZETT M. HAGGARD.

Stevenson and I are great friends; he is such a good chap, but *as* I say of him in my book.







Vinsatopogao From a photograph taken the day before his death  
23. October, 1897  
H. P. de Haan

As regards the volumes themselves, which seem to fetch a great deal of money when they come on the market, I am only able to say that I have studied them with zeal but am unable to make head or tail of them. Perhaps this is because I do not possess the key to the joke or understand the local allusions.

I have only one more relic of Stevenson, a very amusing poem which he wrote to Lang and myself on 'The World's Desire,' or rather a copy of it, for I believe that Lang has lost the original. Again I must express my sorrow that I never saw Stevenson. Evidently he was a delightful man and as brilliant as he was charming; truly a master of his craft. 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' has always seemed to me one of the most remarkable things of its sort in the English language. Longman gave me an early copy of it just after it was issued from the press, and this I still possess somewhere. I shall never forget the thrill with which I read the story; in places the horror of it is enough to cause the hair to rise. His essays, too, are almost unmatched, at any rate in our time, and next to these I should put 'The Master of Ballantrae.' At least such is my individual taste.

About 'King Solomon's Mines' I have only this to add. In it I made a mistake with reference to an eclipse, which brought me into much trouble with astronomers, and also with numbers of the reading public who hurried to expose my ignorance. In a subsequent edition I rectified the mistake, but that produced more trouble, since students of the work had violent arguments between themselves, each quoting the versions that they had read, and wrote to me to settle their disputes. I have always found the movements of the heavenly bodies very ticklish things to

touch. Whatever one says about the moon, for instance, is pretty sure to be wrong.

I may say this further, that no book that I have written seems to have conveyed a greater idea of reality. At this moment I hold in my hand at least a dozen letters sorted from what I call 'Unknown Correspondents,' by which I mean communications received from individuals with whom I have no personal acquaintance. Every one of the writers of these epistles is anxious to know whether or not the work is a record of fact. Even the great dealer in precious stones, Mr. Streeter—I fear I must say the late Mr. Streeter—approached me on the subject. I believe he actually sent an expedition to look for King Solomon's Mines, or at any rate talked of doing so. Nor was he so far out in his reckoning, for since that day they have been discovered—more or less. At any rate Rhodesia has been discovered, which is a land full of gems and gold, the same land, I believe, as that whence King Solomon did actually draw his wealth. Also Queen Sheba's Breasts have been found, or something very like to them, and traces of the great road that I describe. Doubtless I heard faint rumours of these things during my sojourn in Africa, having made it my habit through life to keep my ears open ; but at the best they were *very* faint. The remainder I imagined, and imagination has often proved to be the precursor of the truth. The mines of Kukuana land, *alias* Rhodesia, are destined to produce much more treasure than ever Solomon or the Phoenicians won out of them. Who built the vast Zimbabwe and other temples or fortresses ? Some ridiculous scientist has alleged within the last few years that these were reared by the Portuguese at the time that those very Portuguese were talking of them as the work of the devil or of ancient

magicians in an unknown age. The thing is absurd. Those edifices are the relics of a lost civilisation which worshipped the Nature gods. Who they were, what they were, we do not and perhaps never shall know. Andrew Lang has stated the whole problem much better than I can ever hope to do, in a poem he once wrote at my request for a paper in which I was interested. I do not think that those verses have ever been republished, so I will quote two of them.<sup>1</sup>

Into the darkness whence they came,  
They passed—their country knoweth none,  
They and their gods without a name  
Partake the same oblivion.  
Their work they did, their work is done,  
Whose gold, it may be, shone like fire,  
About the brows of Solomon,  
And in the House of God's Desire.

The pestilence, the desert spear,  
Smote them : they passed with none to tell  
The names of them that laboured here :  
Stark walls and crumbling crucible,  
Straight gates, and graves, and ruined well,  
Abide, dumb monuments of old.  
We know but that men fought and fell,  
Like us—like us—for love of gold.

A girls' school, or some members of it, evidently weary of the society of their own sex, wrote congratulating me with great earnestness because I had in 'King Solomon's Mines' produced a thrilling book 'without a heroine.'

Truly in those days my industry was great. While on my summer holiday in 1885 I wrote 'Allan Quatermain,' the sequel to 'King Solomon's Mines,' from the

<sup>1</sup> Republished in *The Poetical Works of Andrew Lang*, vol. iii, p. 42 (1923), under the title of 'Zimbabwe.'—ED.

first word to the last, although it did not appear until about a couple of years later, after it had run through *Longman's Magazine*. On what exact dates I began and finished the story I do not know, though possibly these are entered on the manuscript, of which I made a present to my friend Charles Longman.<sup>1</sup>

On my return to town in the late autumn I began a novel of a very different style, which was afterwards published under the name of 'Jess.' The manuscript of 'Jess' does not state the date of its commencement, but at the end appears the date of December 31, 1885, showing that it was finished on that day. This book I wrote for the most part in the chambers, at 1 Elm Court, that I shared with Mr. Kerr, the son of Commissioner Kerr, upon an old teak table with a leather top. This table, which I bought of a second-hand dealer, had evidently begun life in some ship where the cabins were low, for it was so short in the legs that, until they were heightened in some way, it used to make my back ache to write at it ; also it has all the solidity common to ship's furniture. Now it is used for trimming lamps in the basement of Ditchingham House.

Whenever I was not engaged in Court, where I hung about a great deal, and even for a while reported Divorce and Probate cases for *The Times* on behalf of that journal's regular reporter, an old barrister name Kelly, when he was absent on a holiday, I sat at this table in the dingy room at 1 Elm Court and toiled at 'Jess.' Sometimes this was no easy task, since young barristers of my acquaintance, with time upon their hands, would enter and scoff at my literary labours. In the evening I placed what I had written in a kind of American cloth music-roll, which either my wife or Miss Barber made for me, and carried it home

<sup>1</sup> These dates are not entered on the MS.—ED.

to West Kensington, so that I might continue my work after dinner. In fact, there were two of these rolls. The first of them I lost on my homeward way, I know not how or where. It contained about a dozen foolscap sheets of closely written manuscript of one of the most important parts of the book, that which, amongst other things, describes the character of Frank Muller and how, after he had attempted the murder of Neal and Jess in the Vaal River, he galloped away pursued by his own terrors. I remember that I was much distressed at this loss, thinking that what I had written was the best thing I had ever done. I waited awhile, hoping that the address written within the case might bring it back to me. But it never did. So I rewrote the missing sheets from memory, which has never been my strong point. - I wonder whether they are better or worse than those that departed!

So soon as 'Jess,' of which I will speak more hereafter, was finished, or rather about a month later, I began another tale which the world knows as 'She.' The exact date of its commencement is uncertain, for it has been obliterated by a clip that fastened the manuscript together, and all that remains is 'Feb. /86.' At the end, however, is inscribed 'Finished 18 March 1886.' Therefore, even supposing that it was begun upon the 1st February, which would mean that I had allowed myself a month's rest after finishing 'Jess,' the whole romance was completed in a little over six weeks. Moreover, it was never rewritten, and the manuscript carries but few corrections. The fact is that it was written at white heat, almost without rest, and that is the best way to compose.

I remember that when I sat down to the task my ideas as to its development were of the vaguest. The only clear notion that I had in my head was that of

an immortal woman inspired by an immortal love. All the rest shaped itself round this figure. And it came—it came faster than my poor aching hand could set it down.

Well do I recall taking the completed manuscript to the office of my literary agent, Mr. A. P. Watt, and throwing it on the table with the remark: 'There is what I shall be remembered by.' Well do I recall also visiting Mr. Watt at his office, which then was at 2 Paternoster Square, and finding him out. As the business was urgent, and I did not wish to have to return, I sat down at his table, asked for some foolscap, and in the hour or two that I had to wait wrote the scene of the destruction of *She* in the *Fire of Life*. This, however, was of course a little while—it may have been a few days—before I delivered the manuscript.

It would seem, therefore, that between January 1885 and March 18, 1886, with my own hand, and unassisted by any secretary, I wrote '*King Solomon's Mines*,' '*Allan Quatermain*,' '*Jess*,' and '*She*.' Also I followed my profession, spending many hours of each day studying in chambers, or in Court, where I had some devilling practice, carried on my usual correspondence, and attended to the affairs of a man with a young family and a certain landed estate.

A little later on the work grew even harder, for to it was added the toil of an enormous correspondence hurled at me by every kind of person from all over the earth. If I may judge by those which remain marked with a letter A for 'answered,' I seem to have done my best to reply to all these scribes, hundreds of them, even down to the autograph-hunter, a task which must have taken up a good part of every day, and this in addition to all my other work. No wonder that my

health began to give out at last, goaded as I was at that period of my life by constant and venomous attacks.

When 'She' was in proof for serial publication in the *Graphic* I showed it to Andrew Lang. He writes to me on July 12, 1886 :

I have pretty nearly finished 'She.' I really must congratulate you; I think it is one of the most astonishing romances I ever read. The more impossible it is, the better you do it, till it seems like a story from the literature of another planet. I can't give a better account of the extraordinary impression it makes upon me; as to the Public I never can speak.

Then he makes some criticisms of the style, the comic element and the horrors, and ends with a P.S. 'I know I shan't sleep.'

On the 25th of the same month Lang writes again :

I have just finished 'She,' previously I skipped a bit to get to the end. I certainly still think it the most extraordinary romance I ever read, and that's why I want you to be very careful with the proofs, before it goes out in a volume. . . . I nearly cried over Ayesha's end. But how did she come to Kor? There is a difficulty about Leo. He is not made a very interesting person. Probably he was only a fine animal. Anyhow that can't be helped now and never could perhaps. I dare say Kallikrates was no better. But some of the chaff in awful situations lets one down too suddenly. I'd take other fellows' advice about it, in some of the marked places. I hope they find She in Thibet, and all die together. [They did, practically, twenty years later, see 'Ayesha.'—H. R. H.] By George, I'd have gone into the fire and chucked in She too, perhaps it would have picked her up again.

In another letter he says :

It is awfully good of you to think of putting my name in 'She' and I consider it a great distinction. The only thing is that, if you do, I shan't be able to review it, except with my name signed thereto and my honest confession. Probably



I could do that in the *Academy*. It is rather curious (plagiarism on your side again) that I was going to ask you to let me dedicate my little volume of tales, 'That Missionary,' etc. to you.

I may say here that Lang did review 'She' in the *Academy* over his own name, but, I am almost sure, nowhere else, although I believe he was accused of having written a dozen or more notices of this work, and that he did dedicate 'In the Wrong Paradise' to me in very charming language.

Having run through the *Graphic*, where it attracted a good deal of attention, 'She' appeared as a six-shilling volume, I think the first or one of the first novels that was published in that form, some time in December 1886. It was brought out by Messrs. Longmans and very well got up, the elaborate sherd compounded by my sister-in-law, then Miss Barber, and myself being reproduced in two plates at the beginning of the volume. The illustrations by Messrs. Greiffenhagen and Kerr were, however, added afterwards. By the way, the reproduction of this sherd was shown as being from a genuine antique to Mr. (afterwards Sir John) Evans, who of course was a great expert on such matters. For a long while he peered at it through his eyeglasses and at last put it down, remarking, 'All I can say is that it might *possibly* have been forged'—which I consider great testimony to the excellency of the sherd, which now reposes in a cupboard upstairs.<sup>1</sup>

The title 'She,' if I remember aright, was taken from a certain rag doll, so named, which a nurse at Bradenham used to bring out of some dark recess in order to terrify those of my brothers and sisters who were in her charge.

<sup>1</sup> It is now in Norwich Museum with the original MSS. of many of Sir Rider's tales.—Ed.

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'She' proved a great and immediate success, and I received many letters, of which I will quote one from Sir Walter Besant, and one from Mr. (now Sir Edmund) Gosse.

12 GAYTON CRESCENT, HAMPSTEAD:

*January 2, 1887.*

MY DEAR HAGGARD,—While I am under the spell of 'Ayesha,' which I have only just finished, I must write to congratulate you upon a work which most certainly puts you at the head—a long way ahead—of all contemporary imaginative writers. If fiction is best cultivated in the field of pure invention then you are certainly the first of modern novelists. 'Solomon's Mines' is left far behind. It is not only the central conception that is so splendid in its audacity, but it is your logical and pitiless working out of the whole thing in its inevitable details that strikes me with astonishment.

I do not know what the critics will say about it. Probably they will not read more than they can help and then will let you off with a few general expressions. If the critic is a woman she will put down this book with the remark that it is impossible—almost all women have this feeling towards the marvellous.

Whatever else you do, you will have 'She' always behind you for purposes of odious comparison. And whatever critics say the book is bound to be a magnificent success. Also it will produce a crop of imitators. And all the little conventional story-tellers will be jogged out of their grooves—until they find new ones. . . .

Yours very sincerely,

WALTER BESANT.

Certainly Besant was quite right when he said that I should always have 'She' behind me 'for purposes of odious comparison.' I always have. Quite a large proportion of my critics during many years have mentioned in the course of their reviews of various works from my pen that the one under consideration is not another 'She,' or words to that effect. As

though a man's brain could harbour a host of 'Shes' ! Such literary polygamy is not possible. Only one love of this kind is given to him.

The second letter that I will quote is from a friend who I am glad to say still lives, Mr. Edmund Gosse, the distinguished author and man of letters.<sup>1</sup>

29 DELAMERE TERRACE: January 8, 1887.

MY DEAR MR. RIDER HAGGARD,—I feel constrained to write again to you about 'She' before the impression the book has made upon my mind in any degree wears off. In construction I think you have been successful to a very marvellous degree. The quality of the invention increases as you go on, and the latest chapters are the best. Indeed it does not appear to me that I have ever been thrilled and terrified by any literature as I have by pp. 271-306 of 'She.' It is simply unsurpassable.

All through the book there are points which I have noted for the highest praise, the three white fingers on Ustane's hair, the dream about the skeletons, the meeting of the Living and the Dead, the Statue of Truth—these are only a few of the really marvellous things that the book contains. I was a great admirer and, as you know, a warm welcomer of 'King Solomon's Mines,' but I confess that exceedingly picturesque and ingenious book did not prepare me for 'She'; and I do not know what to say, of hope or fear, about any future book of adventure of yours. I don't know what is to be imagined beyond the death of Ayesha.

Accept again my thanks for the gift of your book, which I put among my treasures, and now the expression of my sincere and cordial admiration.

Yours most truly,

EDMUND GOSSE.

P.S.—May I say, without impertinence, I think the *style* strikes me as a vast improvement upon that of 'K.S.M.' ?

<sup>1</sup> Now Sir Edmund Gosse, C.B.

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To turn to something humorous—I find the following in the handwriting of the late Rev. W. J. Loftie, headed 'SHE' in large letters.

Are you acquainted with the story of the lady who wrote poetry? She had begun an epic—

'Man was made innocent and good, but he'—

when a visitor called. She left the paper on the table: the visitor came in, waited a little and departed. When she returned she found the couplet completed:

'Man was made innocent and good, but he—

Would doubtless have continued so—but SHE!'

Well, 'She' came out and was a great success. On March 15th Charles Longman wrote to me in Egypt:

I am glad to tell you that 'She' keeps on selling capitally. We have printed 25,000 already, and have ordered another 5000, and I do not think we shall have many left when the printers deliver them. . . . Last week we sold over 1000 copies!

This was a large number as books sold in those days, when people were not accustomed to buying novels in one volume, having been in the habit of borrowing them from the library in three. Moreover, from that day to this the sale of 'She' has never ceased, whilst in America it was pirated by the hundred thousand.

All the reviews of it were not good; indeed some of them attacked it strongly. Others, were enthusiastic. *The Times* (a review in *The Times* then, before the days of Literary Supplements, if good, was very valuable) spoke extremely well of it. *The Times* reviewer, however, criticises the Greek upon the sherd. Had he known that it was the work of Dr. Holden, one of the best Greek scholars of the day, he might

## CHAPTER XI

### EGYPT

Leave for Egypt—Reincarnation—Boulak Museum—Excavations—Removal of mummies—Nofertari—Adventure in tomb—Mr. Brownrigg's danger on Pyramid—Cyprus—Article on 'Fiction'—'Jess'—Home by long sea—'Cleopatra'—'Colonel Quaritch, V.C.'—Press attacks—Publishing arrangements—Lang's advice—'Cleopatra' dedicated to H. R. H.'s mother—Her death—Savile Club—Thomas Hardy—H. R. H. weary of writing novels—Lang's encouragement—Allan Quatermain and Umslopogaas—Winston Churchill's approval—Letters from W. E. Henley—'Maiwa's Revenge'—'Beatrice'—Collaboration with Lang in 'The World's Desire'—Letters from Lang—'The Song of the Bow.'

AFTER 'She' had been fairly launched, and the proofs of 'Jess' passed for press, I started, in January 1887, on a journey to Egypt. From a boy ancient Egypt had fascinated me, and I had read everything concerning it on which I could lay hands. Now I was possessed by a great desire to see it for myself, and to write a romance on the subject of 'Cleopatra,' a sufficiently ambitious project.

A friend of mine who is a mystic of the first water amused me very much not long ago by forwarding to me a list of my previous incarnations, or rather of three of them, which had been revealed to him in some mysterious way. Two of these were Egyptian, one as a noble in the time of Pepi II who lived somewhere about 4000 B.C., and the second as one of the minor Pharaohs. In the third, according to him, I was a Norseman of the seventh century, who was one of the first to sail to the Nile, whence he returned but

to die in sight of his old home. After that, saith the prophet, I slumbered for twelve hundred years until my present life.

I cannot say that I have been converted to my friend's perfectly sincere beliefs, since the reincarnation business seems to me to be quite insusceptible of proof. If it could be proved, how much more interesting it would make our lives. But that, I think, will never happen, even if it be true that we return again to these glimpses of the moon, which, like everything else, is possible.

Still it is a fact that some men have a strong affinity for certain lands and periods of history, which, of course, may be explained by the circumstance that their direct ancestors dwelt in those lands and at those periods. Thus I love the Norse people of the saga and pre-saga times. But then I have good reason to believe that my forefathers were Danes. I am, however, unable to trace any Egyptian ancestor—if such existed at all it is too long ago.

However these things may be, with the old Norse and the old Egyptians I am at home. I can enter into their thoughts and feelings; I can even understand their theologies. I have a respect for Thor and Odin, I venerate Isis, and always feel inclined to bow to the moon!

Whatever the reason, I seem to myself to understand the Norse folk of anywhere about 800 A.D., and the Egyptians from Menes down to the Ptolemaic period, much better than I understand the people of the age in which I live. They are more familiar to me. They interest me much more. For instance I positively loathe the Georgian period, about which I can never even bring myself to read. On the other hand, I have the greatest sympathy with savages, Zulus

for instance, with whom I always got on extremely well. Perchance my mystical friend has left a savage incarnation out of his list.

For these reasons I know well that I could never be a success as a modern novelist. I can see the whole thing ; it goes on under my eyes, and as a magistrate and in other ways I am continually in touch with it. I could write of it also if I could bring myself to the task. I would undertake to produce a naturalistic novel that would sell—why should I not do so with my experience ? But the subject bores me too much. The naturalism I would not mind, but if it is to be truthful it is impossible and, to say the least, unedifying. The petty social conditions are what bore me. I know this is not right ; but it is a failing in myself, since under all conditions human nature is the same and the true artist should be able to present it with equal power. But we are as we are made. Even the great Shakespeare, I observe, sought distant scenes and far-off events for his tragedies, seeking, I presume, to escape the trammels of his time.

To return from this dissertation. I went to Egypt seeking knowledge and a holiday. The knowledge I acquired, or some of it, for when the mind is open and desirous, it absorbs things as a dry sponge does water. I had an introduction to Brugsch Bey, who was then, I think, the head of the Boulak Museum. He took me round that heavenly place. He showed me the mummies of Seti, Rameses, and the rest, and oh ! with what veneration did I look upon them. He told me, trembling with emotion, of the discovery, then recent, of the great Deir-el-Behari *cache* of Pharaohs and their treasures. He said when he got to the bottom of that well and entered the long passage where for tens of centuries had slept the mighty dead, huddled

together there to save them from the wicked hands of robbers or enemies, and by the light of torches had read a few of the names upon the coffins, that he nearly fainted with joy, as well he might. Also he described to me how, when the royal bodies were borne from this resting-place and shipped for conveyance to Cairo, there to find a new tomb in the glass cases of a museum, the fellaheen women ran along the banks wailing because their ancient kings were being taken from among them. They cast dust upon their hair, still dressed in a hundred plaits, as was that of those far-off mothers of theirs who wailed when these Pharaohs were borne with solemn pomp to the homes they called eternal. Poor kings! who dreamed not of the glass-cases of the Cairo Museum, and the gibes of tourists who find the awful majesty of their withered brows a matter for jest and smiles. Often I wonder how we dare to meddle with these hallowed relics, especially now in my age. Then I did not think so much of it; indeed I have taken a hand at the business myself.

On that same visit I saw the excavation of some very early burials in the shadow of the pyramids of Ghizeh, so early that the process of mummification was not then practised. The skeletons lay upon their sides in the pre-natal position. The learned gentleman in charge of the excavation read to me the inscription in the little ante-chamber of one of these tombs.

If I remember right, it ran as follows: 'Here A. B. [I forget the name of the deceased], priest of the Pyramid of Khufu, sleeps in Osiris awaiting the resurrection. He passed all his long life in righteousness and peace.'

That, at anyrate, was the sense of it, and I bethought



me that such an epitaph would have been equally fitting to, let us say, the dean of a cathedral in the present century. Well, perhaps a day will come when Westminster Abbey and our other sacred burying-places will be ransacked in like manner, and the relics of *our* kings and great ones exposed in the museum of some race unknown of a different faith to ours. I may add that in Egypt even an identity of faith does not protect the dead, since the Christian bishops, down to those of the eighth or ninth century, have been disinterred, for I have seen many of their broidered vestments in public and private collections. The idea seems to be that if only you have been dead long enough your bones are fair prey. All of which is to me a great argument in favour of cremation.

Still it must be remembered that it is from the Egyptian tombs that we have dug the history of Egypt, which now is better and more certainly known than that of the Middle Ages. Were it not for the burial customs of the old inhabitants of Khem, and their system of the preservation of mortal remains that these might await the resurrection of the body in which they were such firm believers, we should be almost ignorant of the lives of that great people. Only ought not the thing to stop somewhere? For my part I should like to see the bodies of the Pharaohs, after they had been reproduced in wax, reverently laid in the chambers and passages of the Great Pyramids and there sealed up for ever, in such a fashion that no future thief could break in and steal.

Dr. Budge told me of a certain tomb which he and his guide were the first to enter since it had been closed, I think about 4000 years before. He said that it was absolutely perfect. There lay the coffin of the lady, there stood the funeral jars of offering, there on the

breast was a fan of which the ostrich plumes were turned to feathers of dust. There, too, in the sand of the floor were the footprints of those who had borne the corpse to burial. Those footprints always impressed me very much.

In considering such matters the reader should remember that nothing in the world was so sacred to the old Egyptian as were his corpse and his tomb. In the tomb slept the body, but according to his immemorial faith it did not sleep alone, for with it, watching it eternally, was the Ka or Double, and to it from time to time came the Spirit. This Ka or Double had, so he believed, great powers, and could even wreak vengeance on the disturber of the grave or the thief of the corpse.

From Cairo I proceeded up the Nile, inspecting all the temples and the tombs of the kings at Thebes, to my mind, and so far as my experience goes, the most wondrous tombs in all the world. So, too, thought the tourists of twenty centuries or more ago, for there are the writings on the walls recording their admiration and salutations to the ghosts of the dead ; and so, too, in all probability will think the tourists of two thousand years hence, for the world can never reproduce such vast and mysterious burying-places, any more than it can reproduce the pyramids.

About eighteen years later I revisited these tombs and found them much easier of access and illuminated with electric light. Somehow in these new conditions they did not produce quite the same effect upon me. When first I was there I remember struggling down one of them—I think it was that of the great Seti—lit by dim torches, and I remember also the millions of bats that must be beaten away. I can see them now, those bats, weaving endless figures in the torchlight,

dancers in a ghostly dance. Indeed, afterwards I incarnated them all in the great bat that was a spirit which haunted the pyramid where Cleopatra and her lover, Harmachis, sought the treasure of the Pharaoh, Men-kau-ra. When next I stood in that place I do not recall any bats ; I suppose that the electric light had scared them away.

However on that second visit, with Mr. Carter, at that time a superintendent of antiquities for this part of Egypt, my companions and I were the first white men, except the discoverer, a Greek gentleman, to enter the burying-place of Nofertari, the favourite or, at least, the head wife of Rameses II. There on the walls were her pictures as fresh as the day they were painted. There she sat playing chess with her royal husband or communing with the gods. But it is too long to describe. The tomb had been plundered in ancient days, probably a couple of thousand years ago. Just before the plunderers entered a flood of water had rushed down it, for when they came the washed paint was still wet, and I could see the prints of their fingers as they supported themselves on the slope of the incline.

One of my tomb explorations in 1887 nearly proved my last adventure. Opposite Assouan some great caverns had just been discovered. Into one of these I crept through a little hole, for the sand was almost up to the top of the doorway. I found it full of hundreds of dead, or at least there seemed to be hundreds, most of which had evidently been buried without coffins, for they were but skeletons, although mixed up with them was the mummy of a lady and the fragments of her painted mummy case. As I contemplated these gruesome remains in the dim light I began to wonder how it came about that there were so many of them. Then I recollected that about the time of Christ the

town, which is now Assouan, had been almost depopulated by a fearful plague, and it occurred to me that doubtless at this time these old burying-places had been reopened and filled up with the victims of the scourge—also that the germ of plague is said to be very long-lived! Incautiously I shouted to my companions who were outside that I was coming out, and set to work to crawl along the hole which led to the doorway. But the echoes of my voice reverberating in that place had caused the sand to begin to pour down between the cracks of the masonry from above, so that the weight of it, falling upon my back, pinned me fast. Like a flash I realised that in another few seconds I too should be buried. Gathering all my strength I made a desperate effort and succeeded in reaching the mouth of the hole just before it was too late, for my friends had wandered off to some distance and were quite unaware of my plight.

One of these, a young fellow named Brownrigg, had a worse because a more prolonged experience. He, I and a lady were contemplating the second Pyramid, when suddenly he announced that he was going to climb up it as far as the granite cap which still remains for something over a hundred feet at the top.

As he was a splendid athlete, with a very good head, this did not surprise us. Up he went while we sat and watched him, till he came to the cap, which at that time only eight or nine white people had ever ascended, of course with the help of guides. To our astonishment here we suddenly saw him take off his boots. The next thing we saw was Brownrigg climbing up the polished granite of the cap. Up he went from crack to crack till at last he reached the top in safety, and there proceeded to execute a war dance of triumph. Then after a rest he began to descend.

I noticed from the desert, some hundreds of feet below, that although he commenced his descent with face outwards, which is the right method, presently he turned so that it was against the sloping pyramid. Then I began to grow frightened. When he had done about thirty or forty feet of the descent I saw him stretch down his stockinged foot seeking some cranny, and draw it up again—because he could not reach the cranny without falling backwards. Twice or thrice he did this, and then remained quite still upon the cap with outstretched arms like one crucified. Evidently he could move neither up nor down.

While I stared, horrified—we three were quite alone in the place—a white-robed Arab rushed past me. He was the Sheik of the Pyramids, which without a word he began to climb with the furious activity of a frightened cat. Up he went over the lower and easy part onto the cap, which seemed to present no difficulties to him, for he knew exactly where to set his toes and had the head of an eagle or a mountain goat. Now he was just underneath Brownrigg and saying something to him. And now from that great height came a still small voice.

‘If you touch me I’ll knock you down!’ said the voice.

Yes, crucified there upon this awful cap he declared in true British fashion that he would knock his saviour down.

I shut my eyes, and when I looked again the sheik had got Brownrigg’s foot down into the crack below, how I never discovered. Well, the rest of the sickening descent was accomplished in safety, thanks to that splendid sheik. In a few more minutes a very pale and shaking Brownrigg was gasping on the sand beside us, while the Arab, streaming with perspiration, danced

round and objurgated him and us in his native tongue until he was appeased with large baksheesh. Brown-rigg, who will never be nearer to a dreadful death than he was that day, told me afterwards that, strong as his head was, he found it impossible to attempt the descent face outwards, since the thickness of the cap hid the sides of the pyramid from his sight, so that all he saw beneath him was some three hundred feet of empty space. Therefore he turned and soon found himself quite helpless, since he could neither find any foothold beneath him, nor could he reascend. Had not the watchful Arab seen him and his case, in another few minutes he must have fallen and been dashed to pieces at our feet. The memory of that scene still makes my back feel cold and my flesh creep. I have tried to reproduce it in 'Ayesha,' where Holly falls from the rock to the ice-covered river far beneath.

From Egypt I sailed to Cyprus in a tub of a ship, where a rat had its nest behind my bunk. It was my first visit to that delightful and romantic isle, over which all the civilisations have poured in turn, wave by wave, till at length came the Turk, beneath whose foot 'the grass does not grow,' and, by the special mercy of Providence, after the Turk the English.

Here I was the guest of my old chief, Sir Henry Bulwer, who at that time was High Commissioner for the island.

From Government House at Nicosia I made various delightful expeditions in the company of Mrs. Caldwell, Sir Henry Bulwer's sister, and her daughters. For instance we visited Famagusta, that marvellous mediaeval, walled town, built and fortified by the Venetians, that the Turks took after a terrible siege, for the details of which I will refer the reader to my book, 'A Winter

'Pilgrimage,' written many years later after a second visit to Cyprus.

In 1887, strange as it may seem, the debris of this siege were still very much in evidence. Thus after about three centuries the balls fired by the Turkish cannon lay all over the place. I hold one of them in my hand as I write, slightly pit-marked by the passage of time, or more probably by flaws in the casting.

Here in this beautiful island of Venus I trusted, before turning to my tasks again, to have a little real holiday after a good many years of very hard work. But, as it happened, holidays have never been for me. At the age of nineteen, to say nothing of the preliminary toils of education, I began to labour, and at the age of fifty-six I still find myself labouring with the firm and, so far as I can judge, well-grounded prospect that I shall continue to labour on public and private business until health and intelligence fail me, or, as I hope, death overtakes me while these still remain.

Here I must go back a little. In the winter of 1886, as I remember very much against my own will, I was worried into writing an article about 'Fiction' for the *Contemporary Review*.

It is almost needless for me to say that for a young writer who had suddenly come into some kind of fame to spring a dissertation of this kind upon the literary world over his own name was very little short of madness. Such views must necessarily make him enemies, secret or declared, by the hundred. There are two bits of advice which I will offer to the youthful author of the future. Never preach about your trade, and, above all, never criticise other practitioners of that trade, however profoundly you may disagree with them. Heaven knows there are critics enough without *your* taking a hand in the business. Do your work as

well as you can and leave other people to do theirs, and the public to judge between them. Secondly, unless you are absolutely driven to it, as of course may happen sometimes, never enter into a controversy with a newspaper.

To return : this unfortunate article about 'Fiction' made me plenty of enemies, and the mere fact of my remarkable success made me plenty more. Through no fault of mine, also, these foes found a very able leader in the person of Mr. Stead, who at that time was the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. I should say, however, that of late years Mr. Stead has quite changed his attitude towards me and has indeed become very complimentary, both with reference to my literary and to my public work. For my part, too, I have long ago forgiven his onslaughts, as I can honestly say I have forgiven everybody else for every harm that they have done, or tried to do me.

To go back to 'Jess.' Being somewhat piqued by the frequent descriptions of myself as 'a mere writer of romances and boys' books,' I determined to try my hand at another novel (if one comes to think of it 'Dawn' and 'The Witch's Head' were novels, but these had been obliterated by 'King Solomon's Mines'). So after I had finished 'Allan Quatermain' I set to, as I have already described, and wrote 'Jess.'

It is a gloomy story and painful to an Englishman, so gloomy and painful indeed that Lang could scarcely read it, having a nature susceptible as a sensitive plant. I feel this myself, for except when I went through it some fifteen years ago to correct it for a new illustrated edition, I too have never reread it, and I think that I never mean to do so. The thing is a living record of our shame in South Africa, written by one by whom it was endured. And therefore it lives, for it is a bit



of history put into tangible and human shape. At any rate, the other day the publishers kindly sent me a copy of the twenty-seventh edition of the work, which of course has been circulated in countless numbers in a cheap form. I believe that in South Africa they think highly of 'Jess'; even the Boers of the new generation read it. I remember that when some of their trenches were stormed in the last war, the special correspondents reported that the only book found in them was 'Jess.'

I returned to England by long sea, avoiding the train journey across Europe. This I undertook when I went out in order to study the Egyptian collections at the Louvre and in Turin. As it happened I never saw that at Turin. When I arrived there, purposing to spend an afternoon at the museum, my cabman drove me to a distant circus, and when at length I did reach the said museum, it was to find that on this particular day it was closed.

On my arrival in England what between success and attacks I found myself quite a celebrity, one whose name was in everybody's mouth. I made money; for instance I sold 'Cleopatra' for a large sum in cash, and also 'Colonel Quaritch, V.C.,' a tale of English country life which Longman liked—it was dedicated to him—and Lang hated so much that I think he called it the worst book that ever was written. Or perhaps it was someone else who favoured it with that description. Some of this money I lost, for really I had not time to look after it, and the investments suggested by kind friends connected with the City were apt to prove disappointing. Some of it I spent in paying off back debts and mortgages on our property, and in doing up this house which it sadly needed, as well as countless farm buildings, and a proportion was absorbed by our

personal expenditure. For instance we moved into a larger house in Radcliffe Square and there entertained a little, though not to any great extent, for we never were extravagant. Also I became what is called famous, which in practice means that people are glad to ask you out to dinner, and when you enter a room everyone turns to look at you. Also it means that bores of the most appalling description write to you from all over the earth, and expect answers.

Therefore, although I had the affection of my old friends and made one or two new ones, such as Charles Longman, with whom, to my great good fortune, I began to grow intimate about this time, it came about that I was much envied and not a little hated by many who made my life bitter with constant attacks in the Press, which, being somewhat sensitive by nature, I was foolish enough to feel. Indeed there came a time when for a good many years I would read no reviews of my books, unless chance thrust them under my eyes. Therefore of those years there are few literary records.

In addition to much worry, my work at this time was truly overwhelming. The unfortunate agreement to which I have already alluded, entered into with the firm in which I believe Mr. Maxwell, the late husband of Miss Braddon, was a partner, had been abrogated without a lawsuit, through the admirable efforts of my friend and agent, Mr. A. P. Watt. But this was done at a price, and that price was that I should write them two stories, which in addition to my other and more serious work of course cost me time and labour. The tales that I wrote for them were called respectively 'Mr. Meeson's Will' and 'Allan's Wife.' Ultimately, after various 'business complications,' in the course of which I lost some money that was due for royalties,

together with 'Dawn' and 'The Witch's Head,' they passed into the hands of Messrs. Longmans.

Then I began 'Cleopatra' on May 27, 1887, and, as the MS. records, finished it on August 2nd of the same year. In order to do this I fled from London to Ditchingham, because in town there were so many distractions and calls upon my time that I could not get on with my work. I remember my disgust when on arrival there an invitation to be present in Westminster Abbey on the occasion of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria was forwarded too late for me to be able to avail myself of it. Although I do not greatly care for such pomp and circumstance, that was a ceremony which I should have liked to see.

Charles Longman thought very highly indeed of 'Cleopatra.' Also, he backed his opinion by buying the copyright of the book for a large sum of money.

By the way, unluckily for myself, I also sold 'Jess' outright and *not* for a large sum. Messrs. Smith, Elder, however, behaved extremely well to me, for when the novel proved such a great success they sent me a second cheque of a like amount as that they had given for the copyright, a thing which perhaps few publishers would have done. Moreover, a dozen years or so later, they offered to give me back a half interest in the book if I would write them another work. This I was very anxious to do, as both for sentimental and business reasons I should much have liked to regain a part proprietorship in 'Jess.' But when I wrote to Charles Longman on the subject he begged me to abandon the idea, and as I could not hurt the feelings of such an old and valued friend, I did so, with many sighs.

I should explain that at the time I published only with the Longmans. Afterwards to my great sorrow I was obliged to abandon this arrangement, for the

reason that I found it impossible to place works serially unless I could give the book rights as well. For a while I got over this difficulty, or rather Messrs. Watt, my agents, did, by selling serial rights to the two great illustrated papers. But in course of time, I suppose as they began to feel the pressure of the competition of the new sixpenny magazines, they gave up publishing serials, or at any rate paying much for them. So I had to go to those who would run the serial if, and only if, they were given the book rights also.

Lang did not think quite so highly of 'Cleopatra' as Longman, at any rate at first, as the following letter shows:

You will loathe me for the advice, but if I were you I'd put 'Cleopatra' away for as long as possible, and then read it as a member of the public. You will find, I think, that between chapters 3 and 8 it is too long, too full of antiquarian detail, and too slow in movement to carry the general public with it. I am pretty certain of this. The style is very well kept up, but it is not an advantage for a story to be told in an archaic style (this of course is unavoidable). For that reason I would condense a good deal and it could be done. You'll find *that* when you come fresh to it again. The topic is horribly difficult: there is a kind of living life in the modern Introduction which much of the rest wants, as far as I have gone. I see pretty clearly where and how the condensing could be done. You don't want a reader's interest to fall asleep, and now it would in places. I am writing with perfect frankness because, of course, I want it to be A1 in its *genre*—a dreadfully difficult *genre* it is. As far as I have read I have made a few verbal notes where the style occasionally is not consistent. But the main thing is, at any expense, to hurry on more—to give the impression of solemnity, but at more speed, and with much fewer strokes. I know you hate altering, so it is a *prendre ou à laisser*, this long screed of opinion. Of course I see it is a book you have written for yourself. But the B.P. must also be thought of.

In a second letter, written about the same time, he says :

I gave all my morning to 'Cleopatra' and return her. After Chapter 8 *she'll do!* I have marked a good many minutiae of style, or expression. In a few places, a judicious shortening of moral reflections by Harmachis would give him more point to my mind. Unluckily neither Harmachis nor Cleopatra is sympathetic. Can't be helped. I think even more than before that you should lighten the ship by greatly shortening between chapters 3 and 8. I can estimate this, because to-day I read slick on rapidly and was interested all the way. In the earlier part my attention flagged over all the preparation, and many a traveller would not have persevered. I like Antony, but don't feel that that inexplicable person has had *full* justice done him. The inevitably archaic style will not make it more popular, but that can't possibly be helped. As a whole I think the manner is very well kept up. I venture to suggest some alterations where modern words come in out of tune.

Screw it a little tighter, and I think it is undeniably an artistic piece of work. The imagination kindles up after the killing of Paulus. Before, it is not always up to your level of wakefulness and energy. At least that's my impression. What an awful piece of romance the end is! I like Charmion to turn on him for his bullying the queen. The absence of any business for the other girl, Iras, strikes me as rather a pity. I'd like, if you don't mind, to read over the early part with you as I feel a good deal turns on adding energy to that, and on condensing. The Menkaura bit is Ar, and Cyprus is good—did you take the wreck from the Odyssey at all? I don't see who they can say you stole your plot from. They'll say the parts from Plutarch are from Shakespeare, probably they never read Plutarch!

I do not know whether I cut out much from the chapters which Lang thought too long. Probably not, since I have always been a very bad hand at making alterations in what I have once put down, unless

indeed I rewrite the entire work. Moreover, at any rate in my books, this cutting out of passages resembles the pulling of bricks from a built wall, since it will be found that every or nearly every passage, even if it is of a reflective character, is developed or alluded to in some portion of what follows. The pulling out of bricks may or may not improve the appearance of the wall, but it certainly decreases its stability.

In the Author's Note at the commencement of 'Cleopatra' I see that I wrote the following passage, evidently having Lang's criticism in my mind:

Unfortunately it is scarcely possible to write a book of this nature and period without introducing a certain amount of illustrative matter, for by no other means can the long dead past be made to live again before the reader's eyes with all its accessories of faded pomp and forgotten mystery. For such students as seek a story only, and are not interested in the Faith, ceremonies, or customs of the Mother of Religion and Civilisation, ancient Egypt, it is, however, respectfully suggested that they should exercise the art of skipping and open this tale at its second book.

I dedicated 'Cleopatra' to my mother, because I thought it the best book I had written or was likely to write, although since then I have modified that opinion in favour of one or two that came after it. The following letter from her was written not long before her death, and was, I think, the last I ever received from her.

BRADENHAM: *June 29, 1889.*

MY DEAREST RIDER,—I have only a few minutes to write and thank you for your charming gift, but I must not let the week pass over without my doing so. I think it is got up as well as possible, and the Dedication is most successfully accomplished, which must be as gratifying to you as to me. I have not thoroughly looked at the illustrations, but see that they are very much more to be liked than those of the

~~Illustrated~~ *News*. Thank you greatly for your excellent work, my dear son. It certainly redounds greatly to you, dearest Rider, whatever the critics may say, and I have no doubt they will do their worst. But I think posterity will do justice to your production. I will write no more as I cannot easily add to this.

Ever your most affectionate Mother,

ELLA HAGGARD.

There is also a letter from my father in which he says that my mother opened and looked at the book 'not without tears.' Whether she ever read it herself I do not know, for by this time her sight was failing much.

A few months later I stood at her death-bed and received her last blessing. But of that long-drawn out and very sad scene, even after the lapse of two-and-twenty years, I cannot bear to write.

'Cleopatra' ran serially through the *Illustrated London News* before its appearance in book form. It is a work that has found many friends, but my recollection is that, as my mother foresaw, it was a good deal attacked by the critics who were angry that, after Shakespeare's play, I should dare to write of Cleopatra. However, I have not kept any of the notices; indeed I think I saw but few. Of professional critics already I began to feel a certain repletion. Little do these gentlemen know the harm that they do sometimes. A story comes into my mind in illustration of this truth. One day, years later, I was in the little writing-room of the Savile Club, that on the first floor with fern-cases in the windows where one may not smoke. At least, so things were when I ceased to be a member. Presently Thomas Hardy entered and took up one of the leading weekly papers in which was a long review of his last novel. He read it, then came to me—







there were no others in the room—and pointed out a certain passage.

‘There’s a nice thing to say about a man!’ he exclaimed. ‘Well, I’ll never write another novel.’

And he never did. This happened quite fifteen years ago. By the way, the Savile was a very pleasant club in the late ‘eighties. There was a certain table in the corner, near the window, where a little band of us were wont to lunch on Saturdays: Lang, Gosse, Besant, A. Ross, Loftie, Stevenson (the cousin of the writer), Eustace Balfour, and some others. Of this company the most are dead, though I believe Gosse still lunches there. He must feel himself to be a kind of monument erected over many graves. The last time that I visited the club there was not a soul in the place whom I knew. So feeling lonely and over-oppressed by sundry memories, I sent in my resignation of membership. But often as I walk down Piccadilly I look at that table through the window and think of many things, and especially of the genial talk of Walter Besant, whose funeral I attended now so long ago. Surely he was one of the best and kindest-hearted gentlemen that ever wrote a book. Long may his memory remain green in the annals of literature for which he did so much.

I think that about this time I must have become rather sickened of the novel-writing trade and despondent as regards my own powers. This I conclude from an undated and unaddressed note which I find among Lang’s letters of the period. It runs:

DEAR HAGGARD,—If you jack up Literature, I shall jack up Reading. *Of course* I know the stuff is the thing, but the ideal thing would be the perfection of stuff and the perfection of style, and we don’t often get that; except from Henry Fielding. Yes, I believe in ‘Jess’; but you can’t expect

me to be in love with *all* your women, the heart devoted to Ayesha has no room for more. Probably I think more highly of your books than you do, and I was infinitely more anxious for your success than for my own, which is not an excitement to me. But Lord love you, it would be log-rollery to say that in a review.

Yours ever,  
A. L.

I have not the faintest idea of the genesis of this note. I presume, however, that Lang had aimed some of his barbed shafts at me, probably in conversation, and that I had written to him petulantly. Anyhow his answer is most kind and nice.

The next letter in the bunch, dated May 9th (year missing), says :

I am much grieved by the death of Umslopogaas. I have written his epitaph in Greek and in English verses. [N.B.—These fine verses now appear upon the title-page of 'Allan Quatermain.' I remember Mrs. Lang telling me that 'Andrew had wasted an entire day in their composition.']

'Allan Quatermain,' after running through *Longmans' Magazine*, came out about the end of June 1887. Charles Longman, in a letter dated June 20th, writes :

You have broken the record—at least so I am told. We have subscribed over 10,000 copies of 'Quatermain' in London, which they say is more than has ever been subscribed of a 6/-novel before. . . . We printed 20,000 of 'Quatermain,' as you know and we are now ordering paper in readiness for another lot.

This tale proved, and has remained, a general favourite, the Zulu in it, old Umslopogaas, being a very popular character with all classes of readers, and especially among boys.

Here is a letter from one who was a boy then, but has since become a very famous man, namely

Mr. Winston Churchill, in which he expresses his critical opinion of the work. To this I append a letter from his aunt, Lady Leslie, whom I used to know well, in which she expresses her critical opinion of Mr. Winston Churchill in his youth. I am sorry to say that I cannot remember whether the meeting she was trying to arrange did or did not take place. •

46 GROEVENOR SQUARE, W.

DEAR MR. HAGGARD,—Thank you so much for sending me 'Allan Quatermain,' it was so good of you. I like 'A. Q.' better than 'King Solomon's Mines'; it is more amusing.

I hope you will write a great many more books.

I remain,

Yours truly,

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.

11 STRATFORD PLACE, W.

February 11, 1888.

DEAR MR. HAGGARD,—The little boy Winston came here yesterday morning, not having been in London on Sunday, and beseeching me to take him to see you before he returns to school at the end of the month. I don't wish to bore so busy a man as yourself, but will you, when you have time, please tell me, shall I bring him on Wednesday next, when Mrs. Haggard said she would be at home? Or do you prefer settling to come here some afternoon when I could have the boy to meet you? He really is a very interesting being, though temporarily *upish* from the restraining parental hand being in Russia.

Yours very truly,

CONSTANCE LESLIE.

By one of the saddest of all coincidences, if such things are pure coincidence, 'Allan Quatermain' opens with a description of the death of Quatermain's only son. I dedicated it to *my* only son, and shortly afterwards that fate overtook him also!

I find letters from Lang imploring me not to kill Allan Quatermain. But when he wrote Allan had already been killed, and how could the end of the story be altered? Besides his day was done and his tale told. But he left others behind him.

Before finally leaving the subject of 'Cleopatra' I will quote a couple of letters that I received from W. E. Henley. I should here mention that I was well acquainted with this able and interesting man, some of whose poems will, I think, survive in our literature.

I remember once driving to the British Museum with him and Lang, or it may have been Gosse, or both of them, in a four-wheeled cab, to see some Japanese prints that were on show. On the way I told him that personally I admired statuary, and especially Greek statuary, much more than I did pictorial art. He was greatly astonished.

'I think it wonderful,' he said, 'that you being what you are, and your work what it is, you should prefer form to colour.'

It seemed curious to him that a man who wrote romances should have other sides to his nature. He was extremely fond of war and fighting, witness his Ode to the Sword, and at the club would insist upon my telling him stories by the yard about the Zulus and their blood-thirsty battles and customs. With it all he was very domestic, and much attached to his 'placens uxor' and the little girl whom, most unhappily, he lost. The last note I ever received from him, written some years after our acquaintance had practically ceased, was on this sad subject.

The first of the three letters which I am going to quote is not on the subject of 'Cleopatra,' but in answer to one of mine expressing my admiration of

his volume of verses. As it is, however, the earliest in date it shall have preference.

June 9, 1888.

MY DEAR HAGGARD,—I found yours at the Club last night. I *do* care for your approbation very much ; for I do not think I should have it if my verses hadn't a kind of basis of life.

Lang hates 'em, I believe ; and I shall tell him of your note with pride and glee.

For myself I prefer the ' Life and Death ' lot. But the *In Hospital* sets forth a special experience and is, of course, of peculiar interest.

Always your sincerely,

W. E. H.

The next letter is written from 11 Howard Place, Edinburgh, July 20, 1889:

MY DEAR HAGGARD,—I got a week at Windermere and took ' Cleopatra ' with me. I was alone, and I found her very good company.

You were terribly handicapped by the inevitable comparison ; but you came off better (to be frank) than I'd expected you would. The *invention* throughout is admirable—is good enough, indeed, to carry off the archaeology and the archaical style, though they are both large orders.

And in Charmion you have given us, I think, your best creation ; or if not that, a creation fit to rank with Umslopogaas and the King in ' Solomon's Mines.' And you know that I mean a good deal when I say that.

I am glad to have read the book, and glad to have it by me to read again. It has plenty of faults, but it has an abundance of promise and some excellent—some really excellent—achievement. There is never a sign of exhaustion, but on the contrary no end of proof that you have scarce got into your stride.

Always yours,

W. E. H.

The third letter is evidently in answer to one of

mine. It is headed : *The Scots Observer: A Record and Review*, 2 Thistle Street, Edinburgh, July 26, 1889 :

MY DEAR HAGGARD,—It is pleasant to know that I have paid a very little of my debt. I think the *Romance and Fame* in the current S.O. will not displease you. The writer is a strange, old, brilliant creature whom I have found here, and whose opinion is worth having. Meanwhile, you may put down the attacks partly to envy (for you can't deny that you've had a dam good innings) and partly to the inevitable reaction—for I don't know that your admirers have praised you in quite the right way. And you need bother yourself no more about them. Why should you? You are bound to win, and you need not care three straws for anything they say. You need only do your best, and leave the rest to time.

That I believe to be the right philosophy of things. And so farewell.

Ever yours,

W. E. H.

Archer has just writ the loveliest review of my second edition; and the *P.M.G.*, after accepting and printing, declines to publish! So you see——!

After 'Cleopatra' was finished I undertook various things. One was a tale called 'Nesta Amor,' which was never published, although I finished it. Indeed I agree with Lang that it was not worth publishing in its existing form, though it might have been, perhaps, if rewritten, which I have never found time to do. Another was a romance of Helen, to be written jointly with Lang, which, after many vicissitudes and adventures, ultimately materialised as 'The World's Desire.' Also I conceived the idea of writing a saga, but determined that before I attempted this, I would visit Iceland and study the local colouring on the spot.

I remember that I was a good deal sneered at for my habit of actually investigating the countries where

the events had happened about which I intended to write. Literature, I was told, should be independent of such base actualities. I do not at all agree with those critics. If a man wishes to produce a really good romance dealing with some past epoch, the best thing he can do is to see the land in which the folk lived of whom he means to tell, and, as it were, to soak himself in the surroundings that were their surroundings. So he may hope to catch something of the atmosphere which doubtless they took from their native earth and skies. Then, if he possesses any, imagination may do the rest. Who could write a saga who had not visited Iceland, or an Egyptian novel who did not know Egypt—I mean one worth reading?

Also I wrote a very successful little African story called 'Maiwa's Revenge' and my novel 'Beatrice,' which I think one of the best bits of work I ever did. Here is Charles Longman on 'Beatrice,' no doubt after he had read the MS. His letters are dated August 2 and August 4, 1888.

I was very much interested in 'Beatrice.' It is of course a terrible tragedy—unrelieved in its gloom which increases from start to finish. Still there is no denying its power. . . .

From the letter of August 4th :

I think, too, that 'Beatrice' is your best piece of purely modern, nineteenth century work. I believe I like you best among the caves of old Kor, or looking back over King Solomon's great road to the old civilisations dead two thousand years ago. But it is a great thing to have several strings and not always harp on the same. And there is the same feeling in all your books—that of a power or Fate or whatever it is behind man controlling his actions and driving him blindly forward. All ages have felt it and have tried to explain it in their own way. But what the facts may be—we may know some day. . . .



We are thinking of beginning to set the type of 'Quaritch, V.C.' on Sept. 1st. You will give us your finally corrected sheets, I suppose. We have sold 20,000 copies of 'Maiwa' on day of publication.

But of 'Beatrice' more later; let us return to 'The World's Desire,' 'The Song of the Bow' as it was called at first.

Roughly the history of this tale, which I like as well as any with which I have had to do, is that Lang and I discussed it. Then I wrote a part of it, which part he altered or rewrote. Next in his casual manner he lost the whole MS. for a year or so; then it was unexpectedly found, and encouraged thereby I went on and wrote the rest.

The MS. in its final form I have, bound up, and with it a very interesting preface or rather postscript by Lang which was never published, eight sheets long; also notes of his as to the scheme of the story and the originals of his verses, some of which I drafted in prose. The MS. contains fifty-three sheets at the beginning written or re-written by Lang, and about 130 sheets in my writing, together with various addenda. The best history of the thing is to be extracted from Lang's letters, from which I make some quotations.

The first of these that I can find is dated from an hotel in Paris on March 8th, probably 1888.

It occurs to me that you had better read the Helen of Euripides in a prose crib. There's a bad one. I have forgotten the play, all but half a dozen lines, but it is about Helen in Egypt and may suggest something. The name 'The Wanderer' is already taken by one of Lord Lytton's poems. I had thought of 'A Priestess of Isis.'

The next is from Florence on March 25th:

Just had your letter on the Jews. Do you think it worth

while, if it won't run easily? You have so much on hand, and I am afraid you will tire out your invention. The idea of Odysseus and Helen is a good idea, but don't thrash a willing and perhaps weary Pegasus.

Then comes one from Marloes Road—he is back again in England now—without the slightest indication of a date.

Odysseus calls himself *Eperitus*, as a by-name, in Od. 24. Or *Laertiades*.

Helen should be a priestess in Egypt, say of Pasht.

You won't want much help from *me*. All the local colour is in the Odyssey.

After this I believe that I worked away at the story, of which I did a good deal, and sent it to Lang, who promptly lost it so completely and for so long a time that, not having the heart to recommence the book, the idea of writing it was abandoned. It appears that he thrust the MS. into a folio volume, which was replaced among his numerous books, where it might have remained for generations had he not chanced to need to consult that particular work again.

I've found your lost MS. ! I don't think it is a likely thing, style *too* Egyptian and all too unfamiliar to B.P.

Then under date of October 11th :

I only had time for a glance at the lost MS. Now I have read it. There are jolly things in it—the chess, and the incantation, and the ship; *but* I fear it is too remote for this people. It isn't my idea how to do it (not that that matters), for I'd have begun with Odysseus in a plague-stricken Ithaca and have got on to Egypt. And I'd have written in modern English. However, as it stands, I don't care quite for the way the Wanderer is introduced. He comes rather perfunctorily and abruptly on the scene to my feeling. It is a subject that wants such a lot of thinking out. It would be jolly if one had

more time in this world of ours. Also, if the public had, for after 'Cleopatra' they would not rise at Egyptological romance for a long time. I can't help regretting my veteran Odysseus—I don't think he would have been too 'grey-eyed.' If we really collaborated, as we proposed originally, I'd begin with him; bring him in your way to Egypt, introduce him to the old cove who'd tell him about Hatasu (as in yours) and then let things evolve, but keep all the English modern, except in highly-wrought passages, incantations, etc. I dare say it would make a funny mixture.

Just fancy a total stranger writing to ask me for Matthew Arnold's autograph. Wot next!

Oct. 17th. Having nothing to do this afternoon I did a lot of Ulysses. I brought him home from the people who never saw salt in a boat of Dreams, and I made him find nobody alive in Ithaca, a pyre of ashes in the front garden and a charred bone with Penelope's bracelet on it! But the *bow* was at home. If you can make it alive (it's as dead as mutton), the 'local colour' is all right. Then I'd work in your bit, where the Sidonians nobble him, and add local colour.

Nov. 2nd. I have done a little more. Taken Od. into the darkness and given him a song, but I think he had been reading Swinburne when he wrote it.

The next letter is undated:

Certainly the bow must *sing*, but I don't think *words*.

As readers of the book will know, the bow was ultimately made to sing in words. I suggested to Lang that such words might be arranged to imitate the hiss of arrows and the humming of the string. The result was his 'Song of the Bow,' which I think a wonderfully musical poem.

Nov. 27th. The typewritten 'Song of the Bow' has come. The Prologue I wrote is better out. It is very odd to see how your part (though not your *chef d'œuvre*) is readable, and how mine—isn't. Tell Longman the 'Bow' is a Toxophilite piece.

The chaff about the Bow being a Toxophilite piece refers to Charles Longman's fondness for archery.

Jan. 1st, 1889. *Splendid* idea, no two people seeing Helen the same. So Meriamun might see her *right* in her vision, and never see her *so* again, till she finds her with Odysseus. Indeed this is clearly what happens; take the case of Mary Stuart: no two portraits alike—or Cleopatra. I bar the bogles rather. They'd need to be very shadowy at least. If you have them, they should simply make room for him.

But the shifting beauty is really poetical to my mind.

Here is one more letter dated June 27th, or part of it, which well exemplifies Lang's habit of depreciating his own work:

I have been turning over 'The World's Desire,' and the more I turn the more I dislike the idea of serial publication. It is emphatically a book for educated people only, and would lower your vogue with newspaper readers, if it were syndicated, to an extent beyond what the price the papers pay would make up for. I am about as sure as possible of this: it is a good deal my confounded *style*, which is more or less pretty, but infernally slow and trailing.

Ultimately 'The World's Desire' was published serially in the *New Review*. It appeared in book form in 1890, and I hope to speak of it again when I come to that date.

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## CHAPTER XII

### ICELAND

To Iceland on the *Copeland*—William Morris—Njal Saga—Golden Falls—Bergthorsknoll—Salmon and trout fishing—*Copeland* again—Cargo of ponies—Gale—Off Thurso—Fog—Wrecked in Pentland Firth—Escaped to Stroma Island—Subsequently to Wick.

ON June 14, 1888, in the company of a friend, Mr. A. G. Ross, I sailed from Leith on my long contemplated visit to Iceland. The steamer was called the *Copeland*, a trading vessel of about 1000 tons. What she carried on her outward voyages I do not know, but her return cargoes consisted alternately of emigrants to America, of whom, if I remember right, four or five hundred were packed in her hold, and of Iceland ponies. On her last voyage she had brought emigrants, so this time it was to be the turn of the ponies. Poor *Copeland*! As I shall tell in due course, she was doomed never to see Leith again.

Before I started for Iceland I called upon the late Mr. William Morris, some of whose poetry I admire as much as any that has been written in our time. Also I find his archaic and other-world kind of romances very pleasant and restful to read. It was the only time that I ever saw Morris, and the visit made an impression on me. My recollection is of a fair-haired man with a large head and very pleasant manners. As will be remembered, he was a great Socialist and lived up to it—to a certain extent. Thus there was

no cloth on the tea-table, but that table itself was one of the most beautiful bits of old oak furniture that I ever saw. The cups, I think, had no saucers to them, but certainly they were very fine china. No servant came into the room, but then ladies, most artistically arrayed, handed the bread and butter. The walls were severely plain, but on them hung priceless tapestries and pictures by Rossetti and others. I remember that when I departed I rather wished that Fate had made me a Socialist also.

Mr. Morris, who had visited Iceland many years before, kindly gave me some letters of introduction, and as a result of one of these we engaged a certain Thorgrimmer Gudmunson as a guide. In winter time Mr. Gudmunson was a schoolmaster, but in summer he escorted travellers about the island, and did so very satisfactorily. Two days later Gudmunson appeared with a cortege of thin, shaggy ponies, which were to carry us and our belongings. Here I will quote a home letter, written in pencil, from Thingvellir.

We rode about ten hours to get here, over such a country, desolate, dreary, set round with mountains flecked with snow. At last, about ten o'clock at night, we came to Thingvellir Lake, and then passed down All Man's Drift to this most historic spot. I only wish you were familiar with the Njal Saga, for then you would understand the interest, the more than interest, with which I look upon it. Every sod, every rock, every square foot of Axe River, is eloquent of the deeds and deaths of great men. Where are they all now? The raven croaks over where they *were*, the whimbrel's wild note echoes against the mountains, and that is the only answer given.

We have slept in a couple of rooms attached to the Parsonage. Our bedroom window opens on to the Three Man's Graveyard. They still bury in it. To-night we are going to sleep in a church, and beastly cold it will be I expect. This is an interesting but God-forgotten country. How the dickens

its inhabitants keep life and soul together is a mystery to me, for there is scarcely anything to eat in it and their houses are the merest wooden shanties, ill-fitted to keep out the cold, which even now is intense at night. We hope to get back to Rejkjavik in about eleven days, having visited Hecla, the Geysers, Njal's country, etc. Then we are going to a farm where we have taken some salmon fishing for three weeks. We hope to return by the boat leaving the 3rd of August, so if all goes well I count to be home about the 10th.

Here is a brief description from my diary of the Golden Falls, which served me as a model for those down which Eric comes in my saga.

Reached Golden Falls at 12.30. A most splendid sight. The yellow river, after tumbling down a cliff, bends a little to the right and leaps in two mighty waterfalls, across which a rainbow streams, into a chasm a hundred feet deep, leaving a bare space of cliff between. From the deep of this chasm the spray boils up like steam, a glorious thing to see. . . . Passed Three Corner Ridge where Gunnar was attacked, and suddenly came on a very fine view of the Njal country, a flat and fertile expanse of land stretching away as far as the eye can reach. Nothing to eat since breakfast. Spent comfortable night at the priest's house. Had arctic tern's eggs and 'skier' for breakfast. Then sent pack ponies to Bergthors Knoll and rode to Lithend. I am writing this on the site of Gunnar's hall, which I can distinctly trace. The hall looked out over the great Markallflajot plain, now nothing but a waste eaten up of the waters. To the north is a large glacier-mountain—the hall was built on the side of a hill—and to the left of the house is the fissure into which the dog Sam was decoyed and killed. The lark now sings over where Gunnar fought and fell, betrayed by Hallgerda.

7 P.M.: Bergthorsknoll. Arrived here after a long ride over a desolate grassy flat. The site of Njal's hall is now for the most part covered with hovels. It faces south-west, partly on to the plain and partly on to a river. To the left of the house is the hollow where the burners tied up their horses as described

in the saga. In front appears the fierce outline of the Westman Islands.

29th: Dug last night and found various relics of the burning. The floor of the hall seems to have been sprinkled with black sand (see the saga), but we had not the luck of the American who, when he dug, discovered a gold ring.

On the whole we enjoyed our fishing very much, and I killed a good number of salmon, though, because of the drought, not nearly so many as I ought to have done. Also there were multitudes of trout. The trout stream ran out of a gloomy lake surrounded by high mountains. The Icelanders vowed that there were no trout in this lake. However we procured an old boat so leaky that we could only row a little way from land and back again before she filled. Ross, who had been an oar at College, rowed, while I managed the two trolling rods. Before we had gone a few yards they were both of them bent almost double. Never before or since did I have such fishing. To what size the trout ran in that lake I had no idea, for the biggest ones invariably tore the hooks off the Phantoms and brass 'devils,' or smashed the tackle, but we caught many up to about four pounds in weight. Indeed, the sport was so easy that one grew weary of it. Very charming it was also to stand alone in the blue light at midnight by the banks, or in the water of the wide and brawling salmon river, casting for and sometimes hooking the king of fish. Never shall I forget the impression it produced upon me. The mighty black mountains, the solitude, the song of the river, and the whistling flight of the wild duck—by which the silence alone was broken—and, over all, that low unearthly light just strong enough to show my fly upon the water and the boiling rises of the salmon. It is an experience which I am glad to have known.



At Rejkjavik, for some reason that I have forgotten, we caught not the Danish mail steamer as we had expected, but our old friend the *Copeland*, now laden with hundreds of ponies, among them that named Hecla, which I had bought near the volcano, and I think another which I had also bought. We went aboard the night of the 19th with General Bevan-Edwards and some other passengers, and I recall observing with some anxiety the ship's agent as he rowed round the bows of the vessel, apparently inspecting her draught—also with some anxiety.

I imagine that she had too many ponies in her holds. However, off we steamed, and soon the coast of Iceland vanished behind us. It is a country to which I was very sorry to bid farewell, though I think one only to be appreciated (if we leave fishermen out of the question) by those who have made a study of the sagas. I know not what may now be the case, but at that time these were few indeed. I believe that the enterprising American who found, or was said to have found, a gold ring amid the ashes of Njal's hall, was the only foreigner who had journeyed to that spot for some years before my visit. I wonder how many have been there since that time, and whether proper precautions are taken to-day in order to preserve these most interesting historical relics of an unique and bygone age.

This is not the place to enter into the subject, so I will only say that outside of the Bible and Homer there exists, perhaps, no literature more truly interesting than that of the Icelandic sagas. Also they have this merit: in the main they are records of actual facts. Holding them in hand I have examined the places that they describe, and therefore to this I can testify. Those men and women lived; they did the things

that are recorded, or most of them, and for the reasons that remain to us. Of course certain circumstances have been added, namely those which deal with the supernatural.

The entries in my diary for the first five days of that disastrous voyage are brief and emphatic.

20th: At sea. Bad weather. 21st: Gale. 22nd: Worse gale. 23rd: Worse gale still. Lay to. 24th: Tried to go about four o'clock. Strained the ship so much that we had to lay to again.

Indeed, with a single exception, that of a voyage I made many years later in the P. & O. *Macedonia*, the weather was the most terrible that I have ever experienced at sea. Moreover, in our small vessel there is no doubt that we were in some peril of foundering. The terrific seas swept her continually, and, in order to keep the hundreds of ponies alive, it was necessary that the hatches should remain open, since otherwise they would have been stifled. Had any accident occurred to bring the ship broadside on, such as the breaking of the steering gear, it would seem that we must have filled and sunk at once. As it was we were greatly knocked about, and a good many of the poor ponies died from the cold of the water that washed over them.

At last the weather moderated, and about ten A.M. on the 25th we arrived off Thurso in a dead calm. Here we should have stayed because of the fog, but this the captain could not do, as owing to the prolongation of the voyage the ponies were starving. So he took the risk and pushed on. About 11.30 I was on deck, when suddenly the dense mist seemed to roll up in front of us, like the drop-scene at a theatre, and there appeared immediately ahead black cliffs and all about

us rocks on which the breakers broke and the water boiled, as it can do after a great gale in the Pentland Firth when the tide is running I know not how many knots an hour. There was a cry: the engines were reversed, but the current and that terrible tide caught the *Copeland* and dragged her forward. Then came the sickening sensation that will be familiar to anyone who has been aboard a vessel when she struck upon rocks. Scrape, quiver!—scrape, quiver! and we were fast. Or rather our forepart was fast, for the stern still floated in deep water.

Almost immediately the firemen rushed up from the engine-room, which had begun to flood, though I suppose that the water did not reach the boilers at first or they would have exploded.

Orders were given to get out the boats, and it was attempted with the strangest results. My belief is that those boats had never been in the water since the day the ship was built. Some of them went down by the stern with their bows hanging in the air; some of them went down by the bows with their stern hanging in the air, or would not move. Also in certain instances the plugs could not be found. Not one of them was got into the water: at any rate at that time.

Understanding that the position was serious I went to my cabin, packed what things I could, then called the steward and made him bring me a bottle of beer, as I did not know when I should get another. He, such is the force of habit, wanted me to sign a chit for the same, but I declined. Whilst I was drinking the beer I felt the vessel slip back several feet; it was a most unpleasant sensation, one moreover that suggested to me that I might be better on deck. Thither I went, to find my fellow passengers gathered in an anxious group staring at each other. Presently

I observed a large boat appear from the island and lie to at a good distance from the ship, which she did not seem to dare to approach because of the surrounding rocks.

We consulted. It was evident that we should never get off in our own boats, so this one from the island seemed our only chance. I went to the captain on the bridge and asked if we might hail it.

'Aye, Mr. Haggard,' answered the distracted man, '*do anything you can to save your lives.*'

Then I understood how imminent was our peril. I returned and hailed.

'Can you take us off?'

My voice being very powerful I managed to make the boatmen hear me. They shouted back that they dared not approach the ship.

'Have a try,' I suggested, and in the end those brave fellows did try and succeeded, knowing the tide and the current and where each rock was hidden beneath the surface. They got aboard us, somewhere forward, or rather one of them did. Presently he came running aft, a big blue-eyed man whose great beard seemed to bristle with terror.

'For God's sake get out of this,' he roared in his strange dialect, 'ye've five feet of water in your hold and sixty fathom under your stern! Ye'll slip off the rock and sink!'

We did not need a second invitation, but when we were all, or almost all of us in the boat, it was suddenly remembered that an Icelandic woman occupied one of the cabins. She had entered that cabin at Reykjavik, and never having been seen since, was not unnaturally overlooked. Well, she was fetched, and came quite composed and smiling down the ladder. The poor soul was not in the least aware that anything out of the way

had happened and imagined that this was the proper way to leave the ship.

Then came another anxious time, for the question was whether we could avoid a certain rock over which the surf was boiling. Providentially those skilled men did avoid it, and soon we stood upon the rocky shores of Stroma, which personally I thought a very pleasant place. Had we overset there was no chance that we could have lived a minute in that racing, seething tide.

By this time people on the island had seen what was happening and were running towards us. The first to arrive was a gentleman in a rusty black coat and a tall hat, a schoolmaster I believe. Somehow he had learned my identity, or perhaps he recognised me from a photograph. At any rate he came up, bowed politely, took off the tall hat with a flourish, and said, in the best Scotch, 'The author of "She" I believe? I am verra glad to meet you.'

For eight or ten hours we sat upon that rock. The tide which was high or ebbing when we struck went down, the *Copeland* broke her back; of a sudden under the fearful strain of her wire rigging her mast turned grey because of the splinters driven outward by the pressure. Rescuers got aboard of her and saved many of the ponies, though many more were drowned, including poor Hecla, which I had bought upon the slopes of that volcano. Others were thrown or swam out of the hold and maimed. One of the saddest things I remember in connection with this shipwreck was the sight of a poor animal with a swinging leg, standing upon a point of rock until the tide rose and drowned it. Many of these ponies swam ashore—being Icelanders they were accustomed to the water—and probably they, or rather their descendants, now populate the Orkneys. What would have

happened to us if our cargo on this occasion had been emigrants instead of ponies I cannot say. Doubtless there must have been a terrible panic and much loss of life. As it was our escape may be accounted a marvel. A peak of rock penetrated our bottom and by that peak we hung, as the fisherman had said, with sixty fathom of deep water under our stern. When I was drinking the beer, and felt the ship slip, it was just a question whether she would vanish entirely or be held. In fact, she was held owing to one of her principals, if that is the term, catching on the point of rock.

As it chanced our adventures were not quite finished. Late in the afternoon, after some difficulty, we hired a boat to take us to the mainland. By this time the tide had risen again, and our course lay under the stern of the wrecked *Copeland*. Ross was steering the boat since no one else was available. We passed under the steamer's stern and noticed that she was lifting very much on the in-coming tide. Just as we had cleared it a man appeared upon the deck, screaming to be taken off. We discovered afterwards that he was some petty officer who in his fear had broken into the spirit room and been overwhelmed with drink. A swift decision must be taken. It was not expected that the *Copeland* would hang upon her rock through another tide. Must he be saved or must he be left? We made up our minds in the sense that most Englishmen would do. Going about, we retraced our way under that perilous stern and came to the companion ladder. There stood the man, and while we lay under the vast bulk of the lifting ship, he began to uncoil an endless rope, which he explained to us from above, with a drunken amiability, it was his duty to save.

The tide boiled by us, the hull of the *Copeland* lifted and

of water about us. We wondered from moment to moment whether she would not come off the point that held her, and crush us into the deep. The drunken brute above continued to uncoil his eternal rope, which after all proved to be fastened to something at its other end. At length we could bear it no more. I and, I think, others rose and addressed that second mate, or whatever he may have been, in language which I hope will not be recorded in another place. We told him that either he might come down into the boat, or that he might stop where he was and drown. Then a glimmer of intelligence awoke in his troubled brain. He descended, and we rowed him ashore.

Once more we started under the stern of the *Copeland*, and in due course gained the mainland after a rough passage in an open boat. From wherever we landed we travelled in carts to Wick, where we slept at some inn. I remember that I did not sleep very well. During the shipwreck and its imminent dangers my nerves were not stirred, but afterwards of a sudden they gave out. I realised that I had been very near to death ; also all that word means. For some days I did not recover my balance.

